The War on International Adoption

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Broader ADOPTION ISSUES

The War on International Adoption

‘International adoption is under siege, with the number of children placed dropping in each of the last several years, and many countries imposing severe new restrictions. Key forces mounting the attack claim the child human rights mantle, arguing that such adoption denies heritage rights and often involves abusive practices. Many nations assert rights to hold on to the children born within their borders, and others support these demands citing subsidiary principles. But children’s most basic human rights are to grow up in the families that will often be found only through international adoption. These rights should trump any conflicting state sovereignty claims.’


Professor Bartholet is the current Morris Wasserstein Public Interest Professor of Law at Harvard University, where she is also the Faculty Director of the Child Advocacy Program. She specializes in child welfare, adoption and reproductive technology. Her other interests and accomplishments are in civil rights, criminal justice and substance abuse issues.

She is well known in the U.S. and thought of as a major authority on child welfare in general and as one of the leading authorities on adoption in particular. She has an influential voice in the US. For example, her influence has been noted regarding the US Multiethnic Placement Act which made it illegal in the US to prejudice a child’s future by the assertion of ethnic or racial grouping. She is also well published: opinion pieces, two books, many law review articles on child welfare and adoption. But her name and influence are not so well known or effective outside the US, for example in Canada. We hope to at least partially remedy that awareness of her important work on behalf of international adoption by helping to make her better known here in Canada.

That international adoption is threatened is demonstrated time and again. Most recently, Ukraine has enacted legislation prohibiting adoption of children under the age of five, despite the fact that many of these children remain in orphanages with no hope of a family either in Ukraine or (as of now) internationally. Adoptions in Ethiopia have been effectively reduced by 90%, concomitant with a subvention from Unicef through the US Government aimed at creating in-country aid programs for children.

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Adoptions in China, Nepal, Cambodia, and Guatemala are greatly slowed or prohibited. Other examples abound.

As developmental child psychology strongly asserts, a child’s basic neural brain development occurs and the building blocks of mental functioning are established between the ages of 0 and about 13, when puberty sets in. Deprivation during this early period prejudices the rest of the child’s life. The very nature of institutional placement, no matter how good willed, cannot avoid profound deprivation to the child’s development and thus prejudice the child’s life as an adult and as a citizen.

Institutionalization is contrary to the welfare of children; every orphaned child institutionalized in an orphanage will suffer deprivation of personal love and care during his or her most formative years under the loveless and generic tutelage of an institution. The people who study child development point out that the long term results of such deprivation are very negative for the state as well as for the individual. As Oprah observed talking about African kids deprived of families, ‘when these kids grow up, they will owe allegiance to no one!

International adoption is a complicated topic. Understanding it and the aggressive threat to the continuation of its practice for ourselves here in Canada, takes some careful understanding and perhaps some decisive political intervention. To that end, we would like to recommend that you read Professor Bartholet’s excellent summary of the situation of international adoption, published in the journal cited above, which focuses on five (5) policy issues following from the article’s arguments. It helps to remember that the policy issues are responses to the UNICEF orientation towards nationalism, which is part of the UN’s early twentieth century founding. The issues are the following:

- International adoption is under siege by those claiming the human rights mantle.
- Children’s most fundamental human rights include the right to a nurturing family which is often available only through international adoption.
- Children’s fundamental human rights should trump state sovereignty claims.
- Neither adoption abuses nor concepts of heritage justify restrictive international adoption policies, in-country holding periods or the elimination of private adoption intermediaries.
- International adoption appropriately recognizes children as citizens of a global community with basic human rights entitlements.

A simple way to put the general idea of the article is to say that Bartholet argues that a child’s mind and future should not be sacrificed on the high altar of nationalism. It should not be forgotten that the fundamental bias of the United Nations and the organizations associated with it such as UNICEF and The Hague is the preservation of the nationalistic perspective.

The virtue of ‘patriotism’ means the respect and love of one’s country and culture. The position of ‘nationalism’ urges that one’s nation is the only viable nation and the individual and every action should be subject to the individual’s notion of the nation at all costs. Virtues are personal qualities. Positions are generic attitudes.

Some people suggest that our contemporary world has been permanently changed by communications (the Internet, television, electronic voice communications) as well as modern travel and international business. They suggest that the trend is now towards globalization. They suggest that a stress on nationalism is a reactionary and regressive stance doomed to eventual failure. The promotion of nationalism often has required the sacrifice of human lives. In this case it is the sacrifice of the welfare and lives of children that are demanded. As the character of war has changed, it seems that the means to assert the nationalistic perspective has also changed.

Bartholet presents a general synopsis of her three points and conclusion.

First, in adopting her two sons, now 24 and 26, from Peru, she recognized by her own personal experience – not unlike that of other adoptive parents – that the process of international adoption was so difficult and costly that it itself was a deterrent to perspective parents. And she felt there was something wrong with the policies that promoted such a bramble bush of an adoption process. So she has spent the last 20 something years trying to understand what is wrong.

Second, she notes that initially it looked like the big organizations were promoting adoption friendly policies with the result that new countries were becoming open to adoption. Then, as these policies matured and were implemented, it became quite clear that the opposite was the case – they were impeding international adoption. She seems to have been surprised by that development.

(Continued on page 3)
(Continued from page 2)

Third, with a certain air of disbelief, she noted that such mature policies were harmful to children’s basic need and right to have a family, that the deprivation resulting from institutionalization was profoundly detrimental to the children’s growth and development. Then she recognized that the very organizations who said they were for children were the very ones harming children. And she makes the abstract observation that “institutionalized forms of human rights activism have often played a perverse role.”

At the end of her article Bartholet offers a more human policy on international adoption.

Then she goes into a little more detail on each of these points. It is better to read the original article, but here is what she says in brief.

To her first point, she says four things:
- International adoption is under siege
- The attacks on international adopting have impact.
- The reason for opposition to international adoption
- What the actual threats are to international adoption.

To her second point, she argues five points:
- ‘Human Rights’ means that Children’s ‘Best Interests’ should come first
- International Adoption is in the children’s best interest
- Adoption abuses does not justify limiting international adoption
- Nationalism does not justify limiting international adoption
- Children have the right to the means necessary for normal development

Her third point is actually her own formulation of an Adoption Policy Statement:

“In the face of the current crisis, leading human and child right experts have developed and endorsed a Policy Statement supporting the principle that children’s most basic rights are to grow up in the true family that is often available only in international adoption. It recognizes such adoption as preferable to foster and institutional care, and rejects holding periods in favor of placing children who cannot be raised by their birth parents as soon as possible whether in or out of country. It calls for addressing adoption abuses by enforcing and where needed strengthening laws governing misconduct, rather than eliminating private intermediaries or otherwise restricting international adoption.”

This policy Statement was endorsed as of June 2009 by over 130 legal academics specializing in human and child rights, and six child rights and adoption policy organizations. (http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/about/cap/). The Human rights Center of the powerful American Bar Association developed a related resolution supporting international adoption, formally adopted by the ABA in 2008. These developments demonstrate that those opposing international adoption using child human rights rhetoric have no lock on the child human rights position.

This Policy Statement is consistent with both the CRC and the Hague Convention, if those are interpreted to prioritize the child’s best interests and most fundamental human rights. It is consistent with the Hague Conventions’ preference for in-country adoption: The Statement simply provides that any such preference by implemented through a strategy that does not delay placement. And the Hague Convention specifically allows for private intermediaries, so long as they operate under the aegis of a Central Authority.

[Comment: To have an appropriate Policy Statement to work with is obviously important. If we were going to adopt a political stance in Canada, such a Policy Statement would be essential. And Bartholet’s Policy Statement has clearly been well-thought out. However, it is equally obvious, practically speaking, that the issues at stake regard the interpretation placed upon existing UN and related organizational regulations is the key to the future of international adoption. Regardless of how good any policy statement might be, no North American policies will apply to other countries or in the UN and its agencies – unless, they are solidly backed-up by firm government Foreign Policy support. Ultimately, then, it is a question of whether the US government and its foreign policy, or that of the Canadian government would be able to bring about a change in the foreign attitudes supporting the current orientation of interpretation in the various UN committees around the world.]

Brendan Cavanaugh (brendan@tdh.ca)

Do you agree or disagree?
We would like to hear your comments, opinions, and suggestions.
Adoption Program Updates: 2nd Quarter - 2011

Honduras 1 single woman from BC went to Honduras for the first trip to pass the interviews with the social worker and psychologist and then to meet her 6 and a half year old son. 1 family from Quebec also had their first trip and met their 3 children: 2 daughters and 1 son. The oldest is almost 8 years old. 1 family from Quebec received a proposal for a little boy and will go on their first trip at the end of July.

TDH is still accepting applications for this program. Children may be 2 years and older (practically speaking, most children are 3 and up), with children in the 2-4 year old age range mostly going to adoptive parents under 40. Waiting period from dossier acceptance in Honduras to child proposal is currently 1 to 2 years, depending on the age of the child requested. For more information, please see our website: http://tdhontario.tdh.ca/news_events.html#honduras

Vietnam There have been no proposals to Ontario* families between April 1 and June 31, 2010, 2 families departed on their adoption trip in this quarter. *includes families in other provinces except Quebec.

Ukraine A new law went into force on July 11th in Ukraine specifying that children placed for international adoption going forward will be 5 years of age and over. For the adoption of siblings, one of the children may be less than 5 years old. More details are available on the TDH website.

Russia Look for an update in the next newsletter.

For more information on any program please contact:
Manon Parent (manon@tdh.ca)

Adoption in Vietnam: implementation of the new law

Progress is being made, albeit slowly, in implementing the new adoption law in Vietnam. The law went into effect on January 1, the decrees were issued at the end of March, and we are still waiting for the circulars, which announce the new forms to be filled out both by adoptive parents and by Vietnamese provincial authorities.

On March 26, the first child appeared on the national database, and on May 26, 28 children were added. We were expecting that others would be added on June 26, but thus far only 12 new children have appeared. We are waiting to see which agency will receive the first proposal of the child whose 60 days were up on May 26. Regarding the 28 children, whose time on the database will be over on July 26, it remains to be seen whether these children will go to agencies who have worked in those provinces (Quang Nam, Ha Tinh, Hanoi, Lang Son) previously or will be distributed to the 28 agencies. If the former is true, then we will expect that on August 26, TDH will receive proposals of some children from Vung Tau, as dossiers for these children have been sent to the Department of Adoption for placement on the national database.

Regarding special needs children, TDH has 10 such children in process (5 from Quebec, 4 from Ontario, 1 still in search of a family), all assigned a number of months ago. Even though these adoptions were supposed to have been finalized in May, we are still waiting for paperwork to be completed. This is largely due to the transition phenomenon, while the provinces try to get clarification about how the process works. That being said, we believe that the first 3 adoptions will be finalized within the next week or so, and the others shortly afterwards.

Dorinda Cavanaugh (dorinda@tdh.ca)
Families wanted: special needs HIV+ children wait in Vietnam

TDH is one of 9 agencies chosen to participate in Vietnam’s pilot project on special needs children. There are a number of children, including young babies who are HIV+. If you think that this might be a possibility for you to consider, please contact me. The children are in good health, are receiving antiretroviral treatment (thus their viral load is very low), and some of the babies may be PCR- (so only the mother was HIV+).

In particular, we are currently searching for a loving family for a wonderful little boy in Vietnam. He is 6 years old, very attractive, sociable, friendly, bright - and wanting very much to have a family. He is also HIV+. This child has been on antiretroviral drugs since he came to the orphanage 5 years ago, and is in excellent health. His medical indicates that he understands and follows instructions, is independent, makes good social connections, and loves to help take care of babies at the orphanage. He can draw a house in detail and can do simple adding and subtracting calculations. He is starting to read and write, talks intelligently about past events, uses time tenses and pronouns properly. He can run, climb a ladder, ride a bicycle. He is right handed, can use scissors properly, has good eye – hand coordination.

Many of our adoptive parents have met “Nam”, and fallen in love with him. The family who will adopt him is sure to have a treasure added to their family in this wonderful little boy.

If you have never considered adopting an HIV+ child, and would like to be more aware of what this means, please contact us for further resources and information (or see our website: http://tdhontario.tdh.ca/). Be assured that HIV is not the threat to life it once was, and these children can live to attend college, have a career, marry, have children, even grandchildren. A small price to pay is a daily dose of medication which keeps the virus in check.

If you would like to have more information about Nam, or the other children available who are HIV+, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Dorinda Cavanaugh (dorinda@tdh.ca)

Vietnam Progress Report Requirements Change

Going forward the requirements for submission of progress reports subsequent to adoption from Vietnam will be as follows:

One report every 6 months following the date of the Giving and Receiving Ceremony for 3 years (total of 6 reports). These reports will use the same format as previously (available on the TDH website) and must be submitted through TDH.

After 3 years there is no longer a requirement to submit formal progress reports, although through arrangement with orphanage staff update photos and informal reports may be sent directly by email.

For more information contact:

Manon Parent (manon@tdh.ca)
Long Hai Centre for Protection of Children:

As reported in earlier newsletters, TDH made a commitment to raise funds to help complete phase 3 of the Long Hai Center for Protection of Children in Vietnam. The funds raised at the Ontario Gala in March were for this purpose. In April, I was able to visit the Long Hai Center and see the construction already underway!

Sharon Kashino (sharon@tdh.ca)

Yes! I’ll help Every Day in Every Way!

Enclosed is my VOID cheque as well as my name, mailing address and email address. Please deduct, from my bank account, the monthly amount of:

$25/month    $50/month    I prefer to give $________/month

You may alter the amount of your gift or end your contributions at any time by contacting our office. You will receive a tax receipt for your total donations the following spring.

Alternatively, you may phone Jose Garcia at (514) 937-3325 to make donation arrangements.

Mail your form and void cheque to:

TDH Canada Inc.
36 Home Ave., P.O. Box 963
Vankleek Hill, Ontario K0B 1R0
Fax: (613) 216-2565
Telephone: (613) 482-6306
Charitable Reg.#: 0331249-11-08

OR donate online today at:
www.tdhontario.tdh.ca
Family Features: Ukraine

Five, you say? Yes, five! And why not?

This is a beautiful story, our story, which could also resemble your own story. It started (barely seven months ago) in October 2010. We had been registered for more than two years with TDH as future adoptive parents of a young child of either gender from Vietnam. With changes to that country’s adoption policies coming into effect in January 2011, we feared that our dossier would be put on the shelf for what we estimated would be a two-year period. As we had come so close to our goal, our discouragement was palpable. Then we received the November ‘Infolettre TDH’ by e-mail. It described TDH’s adoption work in Ukraine and, in particular, the urgent needs of children, younger and older, waiting in orphanages for families. In a small boxed insert several children needing families were listed, including a sibling group of five children—four sisters and a brother between seven and twelve years of age. Yes, five children, of which the two eldest were twins. It is difficult to describe what went through our minds at that exact moment….we simply looked at one another, smiled, cried (tears of joy), and ultimately discussed over and over again this possibility with which we were presented. Essentially, it was clear that we wanted several children, so why not immediately adopt a sibling group instead of going through the adoption process multiple times? Furthermore, it was out of the question to separate these children who had already a difficult start in life.

After a sleepless night thinking about it, we contacted Nadia at TDH first thing the next morning and expressed our desire to adopt this group of five siblings. The TDH wheels were quickly set in motion and, after updating our dossier and homestudy report to reflect a sibling group (a big thank you to Ms. Michelle Bernier for her open-mindedness as a social worker), we left for Ukraine on April 14, 2011, for a one-and-a-half month stay. During this time, we got to know our dear children, Julia and Lélia (12 years), Tania (11 years), Dasha (10 years) and Danilo (now 8 years). We went to the orphanage every day, accompanied by our interpreter, to visit the children. A connection was made quickly and, after only a few hours, the children were tickling us and having fits of laughter. Emotions were high and a lovely bond was developing among us, despite the language barrier, as the days passed. To make a long story short, after completing all the steps of the adoption process as regulated by Ukraine, we can now announce that we are the proud parents of these five wonderful children, all happy to finally be loved.

This is our story, but you could have a similar story! During our numerous visits to the orphanage, we met several children, younger and older, waiting for a family. Many of them were very affectionate, polite and in good health. Sadly, their stories are often the same—abandoned by their birth parents who are unable to care for themselves, let alone their children. Still, these kids, even the older ones, have a glimmer of hope in their eyes. It is wrong to think that the children of Ukraine have serious developmental and social problems due to their birth parents’ alcoholism. Again, they want nothing other than to be loved and to have their own family. Think about it!

Danielle Legare and Patrick Guay (danielle.legare@crchul.ulaval.ca)
Translated by Karen Mayer
Adapted by Sharon Kashino
Members of the organizing committee are pleased to invite you to the third annual TDH Gala in Montreal!

Monday, September 26, 2011 at 6pm
Dominion Warehouse, 3970, rue St-Ambroise, Montreal

Aside from being in beautiful surroundings, enjoy appetizers catered by Avocado and participate in our traditional auction. Your attendance at this event will allow TDH to contribute this year the following projects:
• The final phase of construction and furnishing of the Long Hai Centre in the area of Vung Tau in southern Vietnam, the Centre receives, feeds, houses and educates street children and children with disabilities
• The construction and layout of a room for rehabilitation of disabled children in an orphanage in Ukraine

• The financial support of orphanages and adoptive parents to facilitate the adoption of children from Vietnam and Ukraine with HIV or other severe disabilities

Last year the event has raised $ 100 000!
Thanks to your generosity we can make a difference during the evening. We hope to see you there. Be a part of ... From dream to Reality!

RSVP no later than September 12, 2011 online at www.tdh.ca under “Donate Now”. Tickets $175 ($125 tax receipt).

For more information please contact:
Annie Cormier (annie@tdh.ca or 514-937-3325)

Congratulations to Loan and Tam on their marriage!

On May 22, 2011, Loan, our TDH representative based in Ho Chi Minh City, was married. We wish her and her husband, Tam, every happiness! Congratulations!!

Adoption Research

As things in the world of adoption, particularly international adoption, are in a constant state of change, it is valuable for prospective adoptive parents to educate themselves on the topic. There are many websites that present data for your consideration. One such site has recently published the ‘2011 Adoption Guide’. While this is a US publication, it can provide helpful general information as there are a lot of similarities between the US and Canada. Readers are cautioned to remember, however, the statistics represent raw data, subject to interpretation. Another point is that it is UNICEF, whose policies are inimical towards international adoption, presenting the raw data, which may be presented with a slant to support their negative attitudes towards international adoption.
http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/newhope/adoptionguide2011/#/o
or
www.theadoptionguide.com

Another reader has recommended a new website: www.adoptionmagazine.ca that was created by a Canadian adoptive family. Here you will find numerous resources and references as well as personal reflections.
Annual TDH Ontario Family Picnic

On Sunday June 17, 2011 TDH hosted the fourth annual family picnic at Sandbanks Campground. The weather was fantastic and everyone had a great time. About 20 families participated, some camped at Sandbanks and others stayed close by. We had a great spot at the end of the beach to play in the sand and water. The kids enjoyed wading in the lovely, warm shallow water and making sandcastles. Everyone was very full from the feast of food including salads, meats, crackers, buns, ice tea, fruit and cookies. As in the past, the picnic was a pot luck and each family brought a dish. Dorinda supplied the plates, napkins and drinks. She also set up a stylish table to hold all the food.

The event was a great opportunity for TDH families to meet each other and for the children to all play. There were families from Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Belleville, Kingston, and a special visit from a family of 4 from Indonesia. As we all live in various parts of Ontario this picnic is a special opportunity to come together, share stories and create memories. We hope that our children will form lasting connections with their friends who are also from Vietnam. We look forward to next year’s picnic at this very same spot. Thank-you to Dorinda and Brendan for organizing a fantastic day.

By Susan Porritt and Anne-Marie McGonigle
Diner en Blanc

While it is a bit of an effort for families to attend the Sandbanks Picnic (two hours from Toronto, three hours from Ottawa), those who do come usually go home feeling that it was a really good experience; they have renewed or begun new friendships, and resolved to come back next year. As friendships bloom and ripen, individual groups are planning to come in a day or so earlier and engage in their own recreational activities with other families they have gotten to know. A spectacular example of a small private camp experience was on Saturday night, when Philippe Richer and Sandra Bellemare hosted a beach “Diner en Blanc à la mode Montreal sur la strand” for ten people. Philippe’s private hobbies are food and wine, and he practices both with gusto and flair.

Milos Vasic complemented the feast by bringing five ‘artisant’ cheeses. With white sheets, dollar-store white crockery, tea lights, and a lot of imagination, Philippe and the group transformed the beach site into a picture-worthy gustatory feast with his favorite wines, and a simple scallop dish (or, in his own words, Trio de pétoncles U10 déglacés au vinaigre d’érable) enhanced with his vivid descriptive commentary on everything.

Another casual gathering happened Sunday evening at Isaiah Tubbs Resort where several families met and shared a spontaneous pot-luck while enjoying the beach and sunset.

These shared experiences are something you could not buy. Sometimes it really is true: “The best things in life are free!” Such things are the gift of a generous soul.

Brendan Cavanaugh (Brendan@tdh.ca)

Adoption Seminars and Events

2010 Intercountry Adoption Summit

Videos of the plenary presentations and academic panels from the 2010 Intercountry Adoption Summit held last September in Stratford, Ontario are now available. The videos can be viewed both online or downloadable to your computer. The videos as well as instructions on the format and how to download are available on the site:

http://adoptionsummit.uwaterloo.ca/Summit2010_Video/index.html

All videos are available free of charge.

Blog Notice

Where blogs are listed it is as a courtesy to our adoptive families. They are not to be considered publications of TDH. They represent the personal experiences and interpretations of individual families. TDH does not monitor and does not approve their content. We ask families to use discretion in their blog posts with the knowledge that public blogs may be monitored by officials in Canada and abroad. We recognize the value of sharing experiences and building common bonds among families who share the experience of adoption; therefore we publish these blog locations. However, their inclusion here does not imply that they reflect the positions of TDH or any of its staff nor does it indicate TDH’s approval of the blog for accuracy, or interpretation of the information.

Content Requests, Family Features, Questions, Comment Submissions

We endeavour to make each issue of our newsletter informative and interesting. If you have a suggestion for an article, wish to contribute an article, have comments, feedback, questions or a request for information on a particular topic, please let us know! You may also submit photos, with descriptive captions. We love your comments and feedback!

Send comments, questions, submissions to:
sharon@tdh.ca
NEW Arrivals!

Sharon, Arn, Isaac and Nathaniel Kashino of Mississauga are thrilled to announce the arrival of Trinh from Vung Tau. We received her referral on November 5, 2010. Her adoption was completed on April 7, 2010 and she returned to Canada April 21.

sharonkashino@rogers.com
http://j2mydaughter.blogspot.com/
(email for an invitation to view)

To announce your New Arrival
Email: Caroline Bennet at: caroline.bennett74@gmail.com
Your adoption must be completed prior to the newsletter publication date (next issue due out Oct 15). Families adopting from all programs are invited to participate.

In Memoriam

Rocco Morra (1947-2011). Rocco will be sadly missed by his loving wife Georgina. He will be cherished by his dear daughter Christine (Sebastian). Proud Poppy to Gabriel and Xavier. His legacy lives on through memorial contributions to TDH.
Letters to the Editor

Reader feedback and comments are always welcome by emailing our Editor-at-large, Brendan Cavanaugh at: brendan@tdh.ca or our Editor, Sharon Kashino, at: sharon@tdh.ca

Milos Vasic wrote:
I’ve been thinking about the predicament of the adoption community and something’s just crossed my mind, for what it’s worth. After the earthquake in Haiti a communiqué found its way onto my departmental listserv at York. It was put out by some American group; I think their name is Adoptees of Color. They were condemning the reports of child trafficking which inevitably follows disasters of this magnitude. But their statement went a step further, de facto equating international, inter-racial adoption with racism and colonialism. I remember feeling quite ambivalent: on the one hand, I could understand – even sympathize – with some of their political arguments. But as an adoptive parent, I couldn’t help but put myself in the shoes of the writers’ parents. What sense of betrayal they would’ve felt had they read this.

The Editor says:
Dear Milos. I read your remarks about the report circulated at York.

“Adoptees of Color” (AoC) is new to me. But I Googled their site and read their “Roundtable Declaration”: http://birthproject.wordpress.com/2010/01/25/haiti-statement-by-adoptees-of-color-roundtable/

In my opinion, whether the idea is to sacrifice children on the high altar of nationalism, culturalism, or racism does not seem to make much difference. They are all policies which makes children pay the price of adult prejudices. This view mistakes shadows for substance, qualities for essences, trivialities for realities. A child’s welfare and life is worth more than any sentiments of nationalism, culturalism, or racism.

Adoption is about individual children needing parents and individual would-be parents needing children. It is a human relationship, which arises out of mutual, correlative, basic needs. It is not Haitian, or American or Canadian or French, it is not black or white or any other superficial quality; it is something that is fundamentally human. It is something to be supported and encouraged in human terms, not nationalistic and not cultural and certainly not racial ones.

Do their parents feel betrayed by their children? Maybe. But the fact is that there are also good and bad parents, both birth parents and adoptive parents. Perhaps some of these adults were very troubled and difficult children; perhaps some of these parents entered into adoption for all the wrong reasons. There are some very sad individual stories, but for sure, the effort to punish other children and other parents because things did not turn out well for some is not the way to go. As regrettable as each of those stories might be, they do not suggest to me that they should be the basis of a general policy.

Any reading of history leads to the inevitable observation that nations and cultures come and go, sometimes within one human lifetime, but certainly within a relatively short time frame. History is littered with nations and splinter national, cultural and racial groups that have risen and fallen in time. It was Toynbee’s great thesis. What continues to exist are people, not states, and certainly not cultural groups.

The people we are concerned with are children, that is, people-information who are in the most important, basic period of their growth. A child is a developing organism, and that development does not wait for nationalistic, cultural or racial remedies. The child’s time is now, not when the revolution finally occurs.

If racial purity and cultural revolution is wanted, then the response should be to return to their birth countries as adults and make their contributions to the growth and development of that birth nation and culture, to actually do something constructive for children. When the country no longer has orphans and street children, when their young men and women stop producing babies they can not care for, when their culture stops holding these children in contempt, when the crushing poverty of their birth country is robust and productive, then let us talk about stopping the benefits confirmed upon children by international adoption.

Patriotism is the love of one’s country; nationalism is the conviction that one’s country is the only valid expression of a human cultural life style. Patriotism is a virtue; nationalism is certainly not. Adoption is not the answer to national or cultural aspirations, neither is it a threat to them. Adoption is a response to an individual child by an individual set of parents.

Given the millions of children degrading or even dying in institutions or on the streets of the world, given the well recognized abuse that children are subject to by states, by criminal organizations, by vicious people, it is disgraceful, sad, and frustrating that people should be putting so much time, money and effort into trying to destroy the relatively small outreach of help that adoption offers to the few children who can be made available through the bramble patch of impeding regulations.

Brendan Cavanaugh (brendan@tdh.ca)