

Advocacy statement regarding Olivia Atkocaitis, her adoptive parents, and the communities who failed her.

By adoptee and licensed clinical counselor Cam Lee Small
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[Reporting by Amy Covenor](#) on 1/31/23 indicated “DCYF, New Boston police among defendants in lawsuit alleging years of failure to protect girl. Accuser’s attorney says she was kept in dungeon by adoptive parents.”

It would be irresponsible for agencies, child welfare staff and officials, and even fellow church members to assume that being raised in a “loving, Christian home” still stands as an unquestioned, un-opposed protective factor for adopted infants, youth, teens and adults.

Those “Christians” will be surrounded by a cloud of conspirators, state and socially sanctioned authorities and attitudes, making it nearly impossible for the ones crying out to escape. Olivia did, physically. After 14 years. But even before that, her lawyer reported, “The police actually went into the home and documented the dungeon that Olivia was living in, but Olivia remained there for the next seven years,”

That’s a long time to be in a “loving, Christian home.”

When the general public refuses to listen to and attribute legitimate weight to adoptee testimonies, and when the community in general refuses to acknowledge our racialized history and the grip it has on humanity here and now, people like Olivia’s adopters will continue to do harm.

My heart cannot recognize Olivia without also recognizing those who haven’t escaped; the ones we honor through [Adoptee Remembrance Day](#) (a sacred, annual dedication to adoptees including those who’ve been taken through suicide or murdered by their adopters).

For Olivia, her lawyer Mike Lewis says, “It takes enormous courage to do something like what she’s done here... And the big question is whether she’s going to be punished for doing that or whether there’s going to be an acceptance of some level of responsibility.”

This is the work. How many Olivias are still trying to escape right now? Who’s helping? And who’s still enabling the general public to say things like, “Imagine being adopted into a loving family and complaining about it?”

Her lawyer said, “**The people who should have protected her didn’t, and it’s shocking.**”

Yes. And, it’s shocking only for those kept insulated in an ear-tickling body of lies. For many adoptees, it’s not shocking. It’s the bad-tree-bears-bad-fruit we advocate tirelessly against. It’s partner to our “Christian” nation’s proud stance against the adoptee citizenship act. It’s the arrogance that killed Christian Hall and erases his story. It’s the blind eye toward the adoption agency trafficking children through your co-worker’s house. It’s drawing a smiley face on a minor’s hand and using it for website copy. It’s Marine Corps Major Joshua Mast abducting a baby from Afghanistan and receiving praise from his church the following Sunday while the mother is still fighting to get her back. It’s “Orphan Sunday” without addressing the conditions that brought them there; it’s neglecting the birth parents still alive in the neighboring city. Or block. Minds. Hearts. It’s the history of adoption without believing the adoptees who’ve been hurt by it.

Dear church, dear neighbors and friends, and siblings and therapists and teachers and principals and police officers and pastors and adoption agencies and adoption professionals: we trust white adoptive parents too much.

Not all? Olivia is just one person. That’s still too many.

Thank you [Michelle Li for your exhortation](#), “Her name is Olivia Atkocaitis, but she deserves a better one.”

Sources

- 1) News anchor/reporter Amy Covenor, <https://www.wmur.com/article/dcyf-new-boston-police-lawsuit-013123/42725846>
- 2) New Hampshire Public Radio; Sarah Gibson, <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2023-02-01/lawsuit-alleges-nh-child-protection-agency-other-institutions-failed-to-intervene-in-alleged-child-abuse-slavery>
- 3) PBS News with contributions by Rhonda Shafner, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/orphaned-afghan-child-still-in-custody-of-u-s-marine-accused-of-abducting-her>

Additional Support

1. [Cam Addresses Adoption Trauma with CBS News](#)
2. [10 Facts about Adoptees](#)
3. [Currently accepting speaking requests for Summer and Fall 2023](#)
4. [An Ethos for Adoptee Speakers](#)
5. [Subscribe to Monthly Resource Package for important updates and exclusive support options](#)
6. [Access the January 2023 Resource Package](#)
7. ["Should we Teach Children About Microaggressions?"](#)

Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC is an international adoptee from Korea, an experience that informs and inspires his current professional work as an author and licensed professional clinical counselor. He formed his own private practice, *Therapy Redeemed*, in 2018, to raise awareness and respond to the mental health needs of adoptees and their families wherever they may be in their adoption journey. Cam's vision for adoptee-centered advocacy is evident through his 1:1 counseling services, live workshops and support groups, Masterclass trainings, and his active content creation/collaboration in and through various media platforms. His work has been featured in *Christianity Today*, National Council for Adoption, University Minnesota School of Social Work, and Center for Adoption Support and Education. He is currently working on a manuscript for a book to be released through InterVarsity Press to address the intersection of adoption, mental health, and social justice. Cam brings value and much needed perspective to the adoption community, personally and professionally.