



# Join AKA and These Leaders in Adoption November 4th and 5th



## “Changing the Face of Adoption”

### FRIDAY KEYNOTE:

**Robyn Gobbel, LCSW**, has a private practice in Austin, TX specializing in adoption, attachment, and trauma. Her extensive trauma training, coupled with her commitment to the adoption community, makes her an adoption competent therapist and an ardent advocate for triad members. She is the founder of Central Texas Attachment and Trauma Center. Robyn has served AKA in many capacities- all while AKA’s members have shared with her their stories, journeys, struggles, and joys.

### SATURDAY KEYNOTE:

**Betsie Norris** is an adoptee in a successful reunion since 1986. In 1988 she founded Adoption Network Cleveland and became the organization’s first executive director in 1995. Betsie, through ANC has worked tirelessly on adoption reform, and as a result 400,000 adoptees have access to their Original Birth Certificates in Ohio. Betsie trained as an RN, with a specialty in child psychiatry. She currently serves on the board of The Donaldson Adoption Institute.

### SESSION SPEAKERS

**Anne Bingham** has been a professional writer for 25 years and is currently at work on a memoir about her birth mother experience and reunion with her daughter.

**Karen Caffrey, LPC, JD**, is an adoptee and psychotherapist in private practice in Connecticut. She is a certified Somatic Experiencing Practitioner™. Karen is a contributing author to *Adoption Therapy: Perspectives from Clients and Clinicians on Processing and Healing Post-Adoption Issues*, and *The Adoptee Survival Guide*. She is president of Access Connecticut Now, Inc.

**Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S, CTS, LCPAA**, Clinical Director of Post Adoption Services specializing in adoption-sensitive therapy for triad members at ChristianWorks for Children. Her specialties include Adult Attachment Interview, AAI Certification, Theraplay® Institute Certified Trauma Specialist. She has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *Land of Gazillion Adoptees*, and Dan Rather’s rehoming documentary, “Unwanted in America”. She was adopted from S. Korea.

**Jennifer Cochran, JD**, practices in Austin, TX. She has extensive trial and litigation experience, representing adoption agencies, adoptive parents, birth parents and surrogates in terminations and adoptions (foreign, domestic, interstate, second parent, step-parent, relative, foster) as well as contractual agreements (surrogates, intended parents). She is an adoptive parent in an open adoption.

**Amy L. Curtis, LSW, LPC-S**, is an adoptee and currently serving as Director of Post Adoption and Counseling with Buckner Adoption and Maternity Services. She has worked in the field of adoption and foster care for 30 years. Amy is also working on a Ph.D. in Family Therapy, with a focus on attachment and trauma healing.

**Victoria DeJacomo** is an adoptee. When her birth mother was fifteen years old she gave birth to her at the Edna Gladney Center in Fort Worth. After a closed adoption 25 years ago she has reconnected with her birth mother. Victoria holds an M.S. in Applied Psychology and currently works in the legal field.

**Patricia Martinez Dorner, MA, LPC, LMFT**, is a pioneer in adoption reform. She has authored several books including *Talking to Your Child About Adoption*, and co-author of *Children of Open Adoption*. Her adoption and foster care focused practice includes counseling, search assistance, preparation and support, and the opening of adoptions involving minors.

**Connie Gray** is an adoptee and founder of Texas Adoptee Rights, which initiated HB984. Previously, she served as the Texas State Representative for the AAC and a board member for AKA. In 2013 she was recognized with a national award for her work as a Search Angel. Connie is a current board member of the Adoptee Rights Coalition and a speaker for the Texas Genealogical Society.

**Susan Ito**, author of *The Mouse Room*, and co-editor of the literary anthology, *A Ghost At Heart’s Edge: Stories & Poems of Adoption*. She is a creative nonfiction editor at *Literary Mama*; her work has appeared in *Growing Up Asian American*, *Choice*, *Hip Mama*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Making More Waves*. She teaches in the Creative Nonfiction MFA Program at Bay Path University, and is working on a theatrical adaptation of, *Untold, Stories of Reproductive Stigma*.

**Julie Kouri** is the founder and Executive Director of *Fostering Hope Austin*. She mentors families through the foster care and adoption process, and post-placement. She and her husband have 3 children through adoption.

**Penny Callan Partridge**, “Poet Laureate of Adoption,” is an adopted person and a parent by adoption. She co-founded Adoption Forum. She served as founding Board President of the AAC. Penny has published multiple books of adoption-themed poetry, and one essay book, *The People They Brought Me: Poems in the Adoption Community*. Her adoption story appears in *Sacred Connections: Stories of Adoption*.

**Katy Perkins, LMSW-AP**, is a founding member of Support Texas Adoptee Rights, and has provided training and educational sessions about adoption for fifteen years. In private practice at Kingsman Consulting, LLC, Katy connects people separated from their families of origin with community resources and provides support to individuals considering adopting.

**Traci W. Pirri, LCSW**, is a psychotherapist in Austin, TX. She specializes in treating trauma and adoption issues—specifically helping people learn to have connected and healthy open adoption relationships. She is an adoptive mother of two children.

**Kathryn Shelley** is an adopted person, reunited with her birth family. In 1990, she co-founded Adoption Knowledge Affiliates. She served in multiple leadership roles over the organization’s first decade. Kathryn has delivered adoption-related presentations and served on numerous panels over the past 20 years.

**Randy Whited** is the President of the Texas State Genealogical Society. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Federation of Genealogical Societies. His current passion is the field of genetic genealogy. Randy is a data visualization analyst at a major computer hardware and service company. He earned his BA in Natural Science from The University of Texas at Austin.

**Krista Woods, LCSW**, President of Integrity Clinical Consulting, she provides therapy, clinical services, case consultation and training. She trains on topics such as adoption, cultural competency, chronic mental illness and crisis intervention.

*Please visit [adoptionknowledge.org/aka/conference/schedule/](http://adoptionknowledge.org/aka/conference/schedule/) for full speaker bios.*

## Friday, November 4th

9:45 – 10am Welcome

**10am – 12pm Keynote: Finding Each Other Right Where We Are, Robyn Gobbel, LCSW 2 hours CEU**

At the heart of adoption is relationship. Relationship is the cornerstone of the human condition. When we are brave enough to honor our stories and acknowledge each of our unique paths, then our human drive for connection allows relationships to flourish—the relationships between us and the relationship within us. I'm honored to share with my AKA family how I've come to see, through my experiences within AKA, my work as a therapist, and my journey as a person, how together we can hold space for connection and relationship only when we also hold a connected space together for the grief and loss that weaves a common thread in our adoption journeys.

12-1:15pm Lunch (on own)

1:15-2:45pm 1.5 hour CEU

**A. Judges Panel: Hot Topics in Adoption Cases and Legislation, Moderated by Jennifer Cochran, Adoption and Family Attorney**

A panel discussion with judges who preside over adoption and termination cases in Texas; some are triad members. Topics included: post adoption contact, birth fathers/ paternity registry, best interest of the child factors, sibling access, allowing adoptees access to records, open v. closed adoptions, and more.

**B. Adoptee Narrative, Identity and the Autonomic Nervous System: How To Develop A Sense of Identity No Matter How Much (Or How Little) You Know About Your History, Karen Caffrey, LPC, JD**

Having a coherent personal narrative – the “story of your life” – is a positive indicator of mental health, yet many adoptees are missing information about their history. We will explore how our sense of self has its deepest foundation in our bodies, particularly in a resilient and regulated autonomic nervous system (ANS). A life story told from a regulated nervous system feels coherent and like “home” even if our life feels like it “started in chapter two.” Brief, optional exercises will be offered for those who wish to become acquainted with their ANS.

2:45 – 3:00pm **Networking Break** (visit exhibit booths and book store)

3:00 – 4:30pm 1.5 hour CEU

**A. Rehoming in Adoption: Exploring the Darker Side of Adoption, Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S & Amy L. Curtis, LSW, LPC-S**

With over 12,290 international adoptions in Texas, rehoming remains in practice across our state, despite the fact that legal, ethical, and clinical oversight are not implemented. Rehoming opens vulnerable children to exploitation, abuse, attachment compromise, and trafficking. Thorough assessment regarding family dynamics, legal standing, and an adoptee's current well-being, both mentally and physically within their family are all important factors to assess when concerned about possible rehoming. We will explore the clinical implications, as well as applications to consider when working with adoptees and families impacted by rehoming.

**B. Open Adoption: Redefining Family without Fear, Traci W. Pirri, LCSW**

Open adoption challenges the traditional definition of family and forces those within the triad to restructure the family system. Fears and misconceptions often cause adoptive and birth parents

to react proactively, causing misunderstandings. This impacts the adoptee's ability to develop a stable sense of self and can threaten the family's stability. Overcoming these fears and building healthy family roles, fosters an adoption bond that extends beyond the adoptee-adoptive parent relationship, into both extended families. This presentation will incorporate examples from my own family's experience with open adoption.

**C. Child Centered Placement and Lifetime Considerations, Patricia Dorner, MA, LPC**

Adoption embodies lifetime complexities. Building a foundation of understanding is critical to long term outcomes. Central to this is the educational process over time for all adults and the learning of the issues that manifest for all involved. Child centered placement and lifetime considerations requires responsive adults, healthily meeting the needs of children at all developmental stages, including adulthood. This often requires challenging existing beliefs and fears.

## Saturday, November 5th

9-9:15am Welcome

**9:15 – 11:00 am Keynote: From Secrecy to the Statehouse; Ohio's long road to restoring adoptees access to their Original Birth Certificates, Betsie Norris 1.75 hour CEU**

As Texas continues the campaign to restore Original Birth Certificate access next legislative session, this keynote presentation will highlight how Ohio successfully restored access. As a result, triad members have greater access to information in Ohio than they otherwise would, and 400,000 adoptees now have access to their OBCs. The challenges and victories of the decades' long journey will be discussed and practical questions answered.

Betsie has worked tirelessly on legislation to reform Ohio's adoption laws since founding Adoption Network Cleveland.

**11:00– 12pm The Ice Cream Gene - Susan Ito's One Woman Show About Adoption 1 CEU**

The solo performance is a deeply honest, funny and relatable portrayal of adoption and the secrecy, shame and lies that can surround it. Not just the lies that adoptive people are told, but the ones we tell ourselves. It deals with many of the universal experiences of being adopted.

12-1:15 Lunch (on own)

1:15 – 2:45 1.5 hour CEU

**A. Advocacy: A Pathway for Healing, Kathryn Shelley and Penny Partridge**

Finding your own voice in spite of a silent or unjust system can serve as a vehicle for self-realization and empowerment. Kathryn and Penny will provide brief individual histories of “finding their own voices” as founders of adoption services that were revolutionary for their time. They will discuss their ease (or dis-ease) with advocacy then, to the long view now, both within their own family systems, community of friends, and larger society. Their personal stories will serve as an example of the risks and rewards of living within a time of social and cultural changes in adoption practice and law.

**B. In Search of Openness: Stories of Reconnection, Anne Bingham & Victoria DeJacomio (& Panel)**

Anne gave birth to Victoria when she was 15 years old at the Edna Gladney Center in Fort Worth. Victoria was adopted four days later. The two reconnected after 25 years. For much of Victoria's life, the two unknowingly resided within 30 minutes of each other. Anne & Victoria have created a panel to discuss sto-

ries of birth parent/birth child reconnection across several decades, highlighting the way adoption has evolved over the years. This panel will explore the history of “openness” in closed and open adoption through personal experiences; present an array of experiences of reconnection between birth parents and adopted persons; and discuss topics related to identity and disclosure and the ramifications of how these are handled in adoption.

**C. Liberation Among Landmines: Race and Culture in Adoption & Foster Care, Katy Perkins, LMSW-AP**

Participants will learn how race and culture are crucial to human development and emotional well-being, especially in foster care and adoption systems. Discrimination, institutionalized racism, and white privilege will be discussed, along with ways that professionals can help promote, advocate, and celebrate racial diversity while supporting clients and families in the healing process, due to trauma.

**2:45 – 3:00 Break & Networking**

**3:00 – 4:30 1.5 hour CEU**

**A. DNA and Genetic Genealogy: Testing & Interpreting the Data, Randy Whited**

This presentation will highlight the types of DNA tests available, how to select which test or tests to address specific genealogical questions, and how to interpret the results. The presentation allows ample Q&A during and after the session.

**B. One Person, Two Birth Certificates; The History of Adoption in Texas, Connie Lynn Gray**

An historical overview of adoption practices and amended birth certificates in Texas. Attendees will learn about the historical movement and rationale to alter birth certificates, discover the problems adult adoptees have with “government sanctioned falsified documents”, learn why national organizations support equal access to Original Birth Certificates, and hear the facts about restoring access to those adopted as minors.

**C. Thinking Differently About Foster Care, Julie Kouri**

This session will discuss the emerging trends and new approaches around trauma informed care that are helping to reshape policies, practices, and collaborations in the foster care system.

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**LOCATION**

**For the City Center**

500 East Saint Johns Avenue, Austin, TX 78752

**HOTELS**

**HYATT PLACE – Austin-North Central**

7522 North IH 35, Austin, TX 78752

place.hyatt.com /512-323-2121

We have set aside a block of rooms honoring the rate of \$135.00 for 11/3/16-11/6/16. Please make your reservations by Thursday **September 22, 2016**. Any reservations not received on or before this cutoff date are subject to hotel availability basis at the best available prevailing rate.

Reserve online or call 888-HYATT-HP (888-492-8847)

Group Name: Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Block/ Group

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**Habitat Suites Hotel**

500 E Highland Mall Blvd., Austin, TX 78752

habitatsuites.com /512-467-6000

We have set aside a block of rooms honoring the rate of \$93.00 for 11/3/16-11/6/16. Please make your reservations by Thursday **October 20, 2016**. Guests may still make reservations after this time at the Group Rate, however, inventory cannot be guaranteed.

Reserve online or call 512-467-6000

Group Name: Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Block/ Group

Code: AKACC

**FOLLOW OUR BLOG**

Bookmark and follow our conference blog at [www.adoptionknowledge.org/news](http://www.adoptionknowledge.org/news) for articles from speakers, reading suggestions and information on our presenters.

**BECOME A MEMBER**

Join before October 30, 2016 to receive a discounted rate. Individual \$40 (regularly \$52), Family \$60 (regularly \$72), Agency \$70 (regularly \$82)

**REGISTER**

Register online at [adoptionknowledge.org/conference](http://adoptionknowledge.org/conference) or mail in registration form before November 2nd.

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**AKA MISSION STATEMENT**

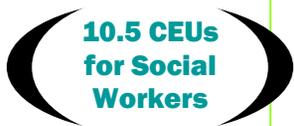
Adoption Knowledge Affiliates, Inc., is a 501 (c)(3) educational organization whose purposes are to foster understanding of adoption issues and to serve as a resource to people who work with them, and the general public. AKA is supported by membership dues and contributions.



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# **Adoption Knowledge Affiliates 24th Annual Conference: Changing the Face of Adoption**

**November 4-5, 2016 | Austin, TX**



**Keynotes:**

**Robyn Gobbel, LCSW**

**“Finding Each Other Right Where We Are”**

**Betsie Norris**

**“From Secrecy to the Statehouse; Ohio’s long road to restoring adoptees access to their Original Birth Certificates”**

**14 Educational Sessions Including:**

- ◆ Open Adoption: Redefining Family without Fear
- ◆ Restoring Adoptees Access to Original Birth Certificates
- ◆ Judges Panel: Hot Topics in Adoption Cases and Legislation
- ◆ Child Centered Placement and Lifetime Considerations
- ◆ Race and Culture in Adoption & Foster Care
- ◆ The Rehoming Crisis in Adoption
- ◆ DNA and Genetic Genealogy
- ◆ Thinking Differently About Foster Care

