

## ‘Finding my roots after 49 years; this is my first time stepping foot onto my homeland’s soil’

Ham Chorong, U.S. attorney: ‘My war orphan birth mother made the choice to give me up for adoption; I’m grateful for her decision for a better life’

“Born in Seoul and having traveled the world, I stepped onto my homeland’s soil for the first time in 49 years. I hope we remember where we were born and that through sharing our stories, we become a stronger community.”

Attorney Ham Chorong (American name: Carrie Rosser, 49), visiting her homeland for the first time to attend the ‘2025 World Korean Adoptee Conference’ hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency, shared these sentiments in an interview with Yonhap News.

Born in Seoul in 1976, Ham was adopted to the United States at 7 months old. She grew up in Mason City, Iowa, a town of about 30,000 people, in a family of German and Dutch heritage. She currently works as a compliance officer and life sciences attorney at a biopharmaceutical company in San Francisco.

After touring various parts of Seoul, she bought cosmetics for her daughters at Olive Young and passed by the site of the hospital where she was born, where she said, “The cycles of fate and the emotions of return.”

Ham’s journey to find her roots has recently become more concrete. Through an emotional reunion with her biological sister over the phone, she is gradually piecing together the puzzle of her family.

Due to her birth mother having health problems, a direct meeting is difficult, but she expressed her desire to convey her gratitude through her sister.

“My birth mother was an orphan of the Korean War who grew up in an orphanage,” Ham said. “Perhaps influenced by that, sending me for adoption was a choice made to give me a better life. I feel a deeper understanding and gratitude for that decision.”

Her family history was unique. Her adoptive mother was also an adoptee, and her older brother is also an adoptee from Korea. She described it as “not a coincidence but a meaningful connection.”

Her adoptive parents prioritized education above all else. Though neither parent had attended university, they took immense pride in her becoming a college student and a lawyer.

“The moment I passed the bar exam and when my husband asked for my parents’ permission to marry me were when they were most overjoyed. They loved and supported me



U.S. Attorney Ham Chorong visits Mother's Embrace Park in Paju.

unconditionally.”

At the opening ceremony of the World Korean Adoptee Conference, Ham, speaking as an adoptee representative, urged attendees to “listen to each other’s stories, learn and grow at this conference. Our journey begins anew here.”

She added her hope that adoptees would support each other and complete the mosaic of their identities.

She described the identity of Korean adoptees as “a unique mosaic formed by the convergence of diverse experiences. We are beings completed by each other’s pieces. We cannot be whole without acknowledging our beginnings.”

Ham highly praised the OKA’s invitation event for adoptees.

“Recognizing the past and building bridges to the future involves more than mere financial support; it includes cultural opportunities and public acknowledgment. Particularly, first lady Kim Hea Kyung’s video message showed us the belief that we are part of Korea.”

She said she wishes to visit Korea frequently in the future. She also pledged to maintain her network with adoptees. 장