ELIZABETH BARTHOLET: INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION (IA) AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

TITLE: Revise to: IA IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Grateful to you: inviting Outsider into your midst - making me Welcome

You are Important

- Indeed Key
- Who Cares? Children, Prospective & Actual Parents - All Powerless
- You Care - And are Organized
- I know of no other Organized Groups that have the Power Faith-Based Organizations you have

Can Make a Difference - Can change the world

- Heard in last HLS Faculty Meeting about REALITY: reality as limiting anything we could do to push for what we thought right
- You & I share - whether not share Faith - some powerful ideas
  - That Faith can change the world - the reality
  - That Ideas can change the world - the reality
  - We know that MLK didn’t accept Reality - the reality of Segregation
  - That Nelson Mandela didn’t accept Reality - the reality of Apartheid
  - We don’t have to accept the Reality that millions of children must live in Institutions & on the Streets, without Parents, without Families
- We share the Idea that All Human Beings count - their human rights count -- Whether they are 1 month, 1 year, 10 years, 100 years of age

- We share the idea that the Child Human Right includes - at the core - the Right to Grow up Loved, Nurtured, with Parents, in a Family

- We need to take this Idea about this Fundamental Child Rights and make it the new Reality

I Will Talk Today about

- The Crisis - the ugly current Reality

- The Forces arrayed against us, against Children, against their Right to Family

- Action we can take

THE CRISIS

- Millions of Unparented Children, growing up without families

- IA is one way to address, only one but an amazingly good way to help make a dent
  - Transforms lives of children placed
  - At no real cost to poor countries
  - At height 45,000 children worldwide placed in IA
  - Astoundingly effective social reform program

- AND YET - IA being destroyed as we speak as option for Unparented

- Down since 2004 by ½ worldwide, by 2/3 in terms of IA to US

- Many talk of death/end of IA

WHY? Not because of any change in Need by Kids or Eagerness by Adoptive Parents - Instead result of deliberate action
FORCES AGAINST IA

- The Child Human Rights Organizations of the world: UNICEF, Save the Children, UNCRC

- Deploying Ideas:
  - That the most important Child Human Right is to stay where came from
  - That Children *Belong* where came from: Nations own children regardless of whether can care for them
  - That Children’s Rights really don’t count as much as Nations’ Sovereignty Rights
  - Wrong ideas - certainly wrong ideas for Child Human Rights organizations to be promoting

ACTION - FUTURE - WHAT CAN WE DO?

Challenge the wrong ideas

Promote our idea - Reframe the Human Rights Debate: Child Human Right to Grow up in Family must at the core

Take on the powerful Forces on other side

Fight in Political Arena - national & international

SOME SPECIFIC ACTION IDEAS

- CHIFF: Important bill
  - At core: Child Right to Family - “Children in Families First”
  - Introduced last year - hopefully will revive after November elections
  - Need Support it
  - But need Monitor also: Keep the Core idea alive
o Danger here & always: “Subsidiarity”

- For many: Child belongs where came from: IA as Last Resort
- Translates into:
  - Waiting Periods before IA considered
  - Destruction for children while wait
  - Foster care in country preferred over IA
- Violates core meaning of Subsidiarity: Child belongs in Family not in State care

o Want CHIFF only if puts Child First: Want the version of CHIFF that demands Subsidiarity in its original meaning and implements it through Concurrent Planning: Child should be placed promptly as possible in nurturing family; if no such family immediately available in country of origin, then place now in available IA home

- International Human Rights Litigation: Reframe the IA human rights debate; develop the Child Right to Family through international human rights courts
- US DOS Human Rights Report: pressure the DOS to include in its annual Human Rights Report countries which violate child right to family through shutting down IA and locking children into institutions

But there are thousands of ways you can push forward the fight for child rights:

- You must take the initiative.
- And if you do, you will be able to change the Wretched Reality millions of unparented children today face.