



December 10, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request you immediately grant pardons to two long-time California residents: Judy Van Arsdale and Emily Warnecke. Both Judy and Emily were adopted from Asia as children by U.S. citizen parents and discovered as adults that their citizenship had not been secured. Pardons will allow Judy and Emily to restore their immigration statuses, access critical benefits, age with dignity, and live without fear of being separated from their families and the only country they know as home. Judy, Emily, and all intercountry adoptees adopted by U.S. citizens should be granted U.S. citizenship immediately. Denial of U.S. citizenship and deportation of intercountry adoptees are violations of their civil and human rights.

Background

Judy Van Arsdale and Emily Warnecke were both adopted as children by U.S. citizens and U.S. military veterans and brought to the United States to be integral members of their families. Their adoptive parents assumed that their adoptions secured their U.S. citizenship, but unfortunately this was not the case. As a result, both Judy and Emily, both aging senior citizens, are being denied critical benefits such as social security and disability benefits, and are struggling with poverty and housing insecurity. To make matters worse, even though they have lived in the United States for close to 50 years, they wake up every morning in fear of being detained and deported to countries where they cannot speak the language, do not know the culture, and would face even worse social and economic difficulties.

Born in Taiwan, **Judy** was the oldest of eight children of a single mother. When she was 12, she needed an emergency surgery. As part of the negotiations to cover the medical costs, Judy was adopted by her surgeon, a missionary and former U.S. Army doctor, stationed with his wife in Taiwan. They brought Judy to the United States, where she was severely abused by her adoptive mother. Judy left home as soon as she turned 18, and struggled to survive. Due to her previous interactions with the criminal legal system, and despite having fulfilled all requirements from the courts, Judy cannot restore her immigration status. She is now 65 years old, has lived in California since 1978, and cannot access social security and government services she needs to live a stable and safe life.



Emily was adopted from South Korea by a World War II veteran and his wife and brought to California in 1964 when she was three months old. Her adoptive parents believed Emily automatically became a U.S. citizen when they finalized her adoption. Marrying when she was just 17, Emily endured several years of domestic violence. Stemming from this terrible situation, Emily had interactions with the criminal legal system, at which time she learned she was not a U.S. citizen. Now 60 years old, Emily lives under ICE surveillance and has a degenerative spinal disease, limiting her ability to work. Since she is not a U.S. citizen, she is unable to receive the full disability benefits she needs to make ends meet and faces housing insecurity.

California is home for both of these women, who have paid their debt to the state of California and the broader American society for their past mistakes. They are active volunteers in their communities and have both received Certificates of Rehabilitation. Restoration of their immigration status is critical for them to live the remainder of their senior years with dignity and respect, and without the constant fear of deportation from the only country they have known as home. As such, Governor Newsom, we implore you to grant Judy Van Arsale and Emily Warnecke pardons as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Adoptees For Justice
AHRI Center
Alliance for Adoptee Citizenship
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)

California Supporting Organizations

API RISE
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Southern California
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Civic Empowerment (AAPI FORCE)
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Sacramento Chapter
Asian Prisoner Support Committee
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
Chinese Progressive Association
Chispa
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Education for Social Justice Foundation
Faith and Community Empowerment (formerly KCCD)
Filipino Advocates for Justice
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Hmong Innovating Politics



International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA)
Korean American Family Services, Inc (KFAM)
Korean American Federation of Los Angeles
Korean Community Services
Korean Resource Center
Korean Women's International Network Pacific Los Angeles
LGBTQ Center OC
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development (OCCORD)
Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA)
Orange County Congregation Community Organization
Orange County Environmental Justice
Orange County Justice Fund
Orange County Voter Info. Project
Pact, an Adoption Alliance
San Francisco Public Defender's Office
Service Employees International Union Local 1021
Sivje Parish
Thai Community Development Center
Toastmasters
Viet Rainbow of Orange County
Visual Communications

Additional Supporting Organizations

18 Million Rising (national)
AAPI Outreach & Engagement, GA
ACLU People Power Fairfax, VA
Adoptee Advocates Of Michigan, MI
Adoptee Hub, MN
Adoption Mosaic, OR
African Communities Together (national)
AK Connection, MN
Also-Known-As, Inc., NY
Asian Adoptees of Canada (Canada)
Asian Adult Adoptees of Washington, WA
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Atlanta, GA
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, DC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago, IL
Asian Counseling and Referral Service, WA
Beteseb Felega - Ethiopian Adoption Connection, KS



BIPOC Adoptees LLC, OR
CAPI USA, MN
CASA (national)
Chinese Adoptee Alliance, NY
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP), NY
Comunidades Sin Fronteras CSF-CT INC, CT
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible, CT
Counseling at The Green House, IN
Creating a Family, NC
Domino Foundation, UT
Family to Family Support Network, CO
Georgetown University Asian American Student Association, DC
Hamkae Center, VA
HANA Center, IL
IAMADOPTTEE, Inc., NY
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, IL
InclusionPro, UT
KAN-WIN, IL
Korean American Women's Association USA (national)
Korean Adoptee Association of Georgia, GA
Korean Adoptees of Chicago, IL
Korean American Association of Minnesota, MN
Korean American Coalition of Chicago, IL
Korean Quarterly, MN
Korean-American Society of Iowa, IA
Korean-American Women's Association of the USA, Inc., VA
MinKwon Center for Community Action, NY & NJ
Nanchang Project, VA
National Center on Adoption and Permanency, MA
National Immigration Law Center (national)
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG) (national)
National Partnership for New Americans (national)
New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia, PA
New York Immigration Coalition, NY
New York University Law APALSA, NY
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (national)
Occupy Bergen County, NJ
Ohio Immigrant Alliance, OH
Saving Our Sisters - SOS, Inc., FL
The Rhizome Center for Migrants, TX



Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community (national)

United for Adoption, UT

VOICES, a BIPOC Adoptee Community, OR

Woori Center, PA

Woori Juntos, TX

Yeondae (Collective of Asian Adoptees for Justice), OR