

THE INVISIBLE NATION

If orphanhood were a country, it would be the seventh largest in the world. Over 200 million children live without parents, many without homes, protection or identity. They wake each day within questions: Who will stay? Who will see me? Where do I belong? This is The Invisible Nation, a nation we all know exists, yet too often left unseen. Orphanhood is not just a personal misfortune. It's a global inheritance of war, disease, poverty and the absence of needed care. And the systems built to solve it, for example: foster care, adoption, orphanages, can carry wounds of their own. They offer structure, but not always safety. They offer placement, but not always presence. They offer love, yes, but sometimes without legacy.

Early childhood is not a phase, it's a foundation. It's where selfhood is born. When the first years are marked by trauma or absence, the cost is more than emotional. It's developmental and in most cases lifelong. Trauma rewires the mind and fear becomes instinct. The brain learns to survive, not to trust. The wounds that you hide to others, teaches the heart to hold back and to hide its needs. Both leave marks to the body and soul and no form of care can undo that damage unless the right kind of care is present. It's not about giving a child a home. It's about giving them their own sense of home. A home where they are known, held, heard and most importantly, where they are allowed to know themselves.

And this is where adoption, even in its most loving form, asks us to go deeper. To listen to the stories behind these children. Many adoptees grow up cherished, but yet disconnected and caught between cultures, languages and the differences between their past and now. Even with the best intentions, a child can lose its origin. And everyone deserves more than to be shaped by a future that forgets the value of their beginning. Adoption should never mean erasure. It should mean preservation, a recognition that to truly love a child is to love their whole story even the parts that ache.

I see an profound connection between artists and orphans. Both groups often live outside the traditional structures and both ask deep questions about identity and purpose such as love and loss. And lastly both are often misunderstood, romanticized or ignored. As an orphan from China and an artist myself, i don't see art as something you produce. It's something you carry and live with. It's a mirror to remember and an experience to translate. Often that translation is fragmented, but it's real. There is a reason I return to certain themes and a reason I feel pulled by voices that go unheard. It's because I don't see art as separate from life. It is a way of being within the experiences and acknowledgements alongside everyday life.

When an artist enters an orphanage, not as a saviour, but as a witness, a new kind of place is created. One where stories are not just shared, but shaped. Where children are given art as a tool to express what cannot be spoken. Where creativity becomes a way to explore belonging and language for becoming. And this isn't just healing for the child. It could be healing for the artist too, because in those spaces, you are reminded of your own roots and your own questions. Children cut through illusions and demand honesty. They remind you why you began creating in the first place. But this work must be done with care and deep connection in form of respect. This is meant for artists who understand that art could be a promise. The intertwining of artistic research and orphan care could lead to a new kind of collaboration. Not based on performance, but on a communitive process of becoming.