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FAMILY NEWSLETTER February 2014

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RACIALLY CONSCIENTIOUS PARENTING

The Challenges and Joys of Transracial Adoption

BY LACIE WATSON-HUGHES, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR

Parents who are raising children of a different race face a unique set of challenges and joys. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, approximately 40 percent of adoptions in the United States are transracial and that number is increasing annually. As these numbers grow, adoptive parents find themselves addressing issues of cultural awareness, racial identity and racism. Gone are the days when social workers used to tell parents, "Just love your child and raise them as though you gave birth to him/her." This colorblind approach, though well intended, sent children into the world unprepared and unable to cope with the realities of race.

Racially conscientious parenting involves awareness and courage, action and commitment, persistence and understanding. Don't be a "colorblind" parent. Avoidance is unhelpful and silence is complicit. Instead, be willing to acknowledge and discuss the reality of personal prejudices, racism and institutionalized inequalities, and be prepared to model

constructive ways to challenge racism.

Recently, I spoke with a family who has been matched with a sibling group of a different race. They were looking for advice on dealing with "politically incorrect" extended family members

66 Parents have an obligation to help their children embrace their personal history and develop a strong sense of racial identity while instilling a sense of belonging and full family membership.⁹⁹

whose visits routinely included racist rants. Previous attempts to challenge their opinions with calm discussion had only resulted in anger and disappointment. My advice? Don't sugarcoat the issue by labeling it "politically incorrect." This is racism. Create firm boundaries and protect your children - even if it's from other

family members. If you allow these scenarios to go unchallenged, you are corrupting your home's "safe" environment and sending a message that racism can be overlooked or excused.

In his book, *Transracial Adoption and Foster Care: Practical Issues for Professionals*, Joseph Crumbley writes that "Love is not enough. Love is only the beginning. Parents have an obligation to help their children embrace their personal history and develop a strong sense of racial identity while instilling a sense of belonging and full family membership."

One of the greatest gifts a parent can give their child is to provide them with the tools and experiences that can help them build a strong sense of racial identity, an appreciation for the richness of all cultures and a positive self-image.

See Page 2 for a list of resources on Transracial Adoption.

The Mavin Family

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AFROS, TWISTS & BRAIDS, OH MY!

Helpful Hints For Taking Care of Ethnic Hair

Ethnic hair can be daunting or downright intimidating. But it doesn't need to be. Relax, take a deep breath, and remember, knowledge is power!

Ethnic hair comes in a variety of textures and curl patterns. The combination of texture and curl makes ethnic hair prone to breakage. Identifying the natural curl pattern (www.naturalhairrules.com/hair-typing-for-beginnings/) is key to choosing the ideal hair products and styling methods for clean, moisturized and tangle-free hair.

Moisturize. Moisturize. Moisturize.

Ethnic hair doesn't produce as much natural oil as Caucasian and Asian hair. Applying moisturizers to the hair will keep it soft, manageable and tangle free. Look for products with natural oils such as jojoba, almond, hemp seed, olive or coconut and avoid products with mineral oil, petroleum jelly or parabens.

Go Gently

Ethnic hair tangles easily. Never use a brush or try to comb dry hair with a tight curl pattern. One of the best investments you can make is in a good detangling

product made specifically for ethnic hair. Distribute generously using your fingers to sweep it through the hair and onto the scalp. Leave in conditioners also add moisture, prevent breakage and are a great tool to have in your daily maintenance routine.



Ciana C07784

Be Patient and Persevere

One of the things I love most about ethnic hair is its versatility. Armed with the right products and/or resources, this hair

type can be blow-dried and flat-ironed straight, braided in an elegant up do, twisted in a funky afro, etc. However, I do want to caution parents who are caring for children with ethnic hair that while you may be tempted to put a chemical relaxer in your child's hair for short-term ease of care - hair care experts strongly discourage these products for children. As well, parents should be cognizant that braids pulled too tight or worn for considerable lengths of time can cause hair thinning and breakage.

Inspiration

Feeling uninspired? Overwhelmed? Check out the fabulous blog Chocolate Hair/Vanilla Care (www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com). This mom is doing it all right! Her blog not only chronicles her trial and error discovery of hair products and step-by-step instructions, but she respectfully documents how she has been able to instill her daughter with a positive sense of identity, self-respect and empowerment, "using hair as our common language". She is a superhero!

TRANSRACIAL EDUCATION & RESOURCES

Whether you're a family who is deciding if transracial adoption is right for you, a family waiting to welcome a child of any race into your home, or a family who has already adopted transracially, education is so important.

SUGGESTED READING:

- *BLACK BABY, WHITE HANDS: A VIEW FROM THE CRIB* BY JAIYA JOHN. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).
- *I'M CHOCOLATE, YOU'RE VANILLA: RAISING HEALTHY BLACK AND BIRACIAL CHILDREN IN A RACE-CONSCIOUS WORLD* BY MARGUERITE A. WRIGHT. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).
- *LOVING ACROSS THE COLOR LINE: A WHITE ADOPTIVE MOTHER LEARNS ABOUT RACE* BY SHARON E. RUSH. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).
- *IN THEIR OWN VOICES BOOK SERIES* BY RITA J. SIMON AND RHONDA M. ROORDA. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

- CONSPICUOUS FAMILIES. AN ONLINE LEARNING COURSE OFFERED BY ADOPTION LEARNING PARTNERS AT WWW.ADOPTIONLEARNINGPARTNERS.ORG.
- RACIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES TRAINING (FOUR SEPARATE COURSES) OFFERED BY FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIVE COMMUNITY TRAINING AT [HTTP://WWW.FOSTERPARENTSTEST.COM/STORE/INDEX.HTM](http://WWW.FOSTERPARENTSTEST.COM/STORE/INDEX.HTM).

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- TRANSRACIAL PARENTING IN FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION: [HTTP://WWW.IFAPA.ORG/PDF_DOCS/TRANSRACIALPARENTING.PDF](http://WWW.IFAPA.ORG/PDF_DOCS/TRANSRACIALPARENTING.PDF)
- WE CAN DO BETTER COMPANION VIDEOS FROM THE MOVIE "ADOPTED": [HTTP://WWW.ADOPTEDTHEMOVIE.COM/COMPANION-DVD/](http://WWW.ADOPTEDTHEMOVIE.COM/COMPANION-DVD/)
- THE CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY: [HTTPS://WWW.CHILDWELFARE.GOV/ADOPTION/ADOPTIVE/MINORITY_GROUPS.CFM](https://WWW.CHILDWELFARE.GOV/ADOPTION/ADOPTIVE/MINORITY_GROUPS.CFM)

CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

- *I DON'T HAVE YOUR EYES* BY CARRIE A. KITZE. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).
- *IT'S OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT* BY TODD PARR. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).
- *MIXED BLESSING: A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT A MULTI-RACIAL FAMILY* BY MARSHA COSMAN. AVAILABLE ON [AMAZON](#).

A TRANSRACIALLY-ADOPTED CHILD'S BILL OF RIGHTS

ADAPTED BY LIZA STEINBERG TRIGGS FROM "A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MIXED FOLKS," BY MARILYN DRAMÉ

- Every child is entitled to love and full membership in her family.
- Every child is entitled to have his culture embraced and valued.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that this is a race conscious society.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that she will experience life differently than they do.
- Every child is entitled to parents who are not looking to "save" him or to improve the world.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that being in a family doesn't depend on "matching."
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that transracial adoption changes the family forever.
- Every child is entitled to be accepted by extended family members.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that, if they are white, they benefit from racism.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that they can't transmit the child's birth culture if it is not their own.
- Every child is entitled to have items at home that are made for and by people of his race.
- Every child is entitled to opportunities to make friends with people of her race or ethnicity.
- Every child is entitled to daily opportunities of positive experiences with his birth culture.
- Every child is entitled to build racial pride within her own home, school, and neighborhood.
- Every child is entitled to have many opportunities to connect with adults of the child's race.
- Every child is entitled to parents who accept, understand and empathize with her culture.
- Every child is entitled to learn survival, problem-solving, and coping skills in a context of racial pride.
- Every child is entitled to take pride in the development of a dual identity and a multicultural/multiracial perspective on life.
- Every child is entitled to find his multiculturalism to be an asset and to conclude, "I've got the best of both worlds."

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<http://www.pactadopt.org>

Shilo C07042



© Into The Woods Photography

Shilo would like families to know, "I'm funny, I like to laugh and I'm nice!" She is an active young girl who enjoys playing games and playing with Barbies. Shilo likes playing outside, swimming, going to the park or beach, and doing arts & crafts. When she hangs out with her friends she likes to listen to music, play at the park and get ice cream. Shilo loves to go shopping and is willing to try new things. She likes stuffed animals and her favorite animal is a dog, especially puppies. If Shilo could go anywhere in the world, she would like to go to Disney World because she would like to get toys and see the park and the animals there. When asked what she is most proud of, she replied, "I'm proud of my grades, I get A's and B's!" If Shilo had three wishes she says, "I would like to be 16 years old, to have even more friends and to have a nice family." When she grows up she would like to be a nurse.

Shilo reports, "I would like to go shopping, visit Disney World and adopt a dog with my forever family!" An adoptive family for Shilo would need to have patience and understanding when it comes to her transitioning into the family setting. Shilo thrives

with unconditional love and support. It would be beneficial to Shilo if she were the only or youngest child in the home with older adult children (late high school or college aged). The family must be able to address Shilo's needs and be able to seek out any support services that would be beneficial to her well being. In addition, the family must be supportive and continue to facilitate therapeutic services for as long as Shilo may need them. The family must be strong advocates for Shilo at home, in the community and at school to make sure that all of her needs are being met. It is important to Shilo that she is able to maintain contact with her siblings, who are in another adoptive placement, as she has strong bonds with them. Shilo has voiced that she would prefer a two-parent home to help her when she is having a tough day.

For more information about Shilo and to view her video and profile, visit www.mare.org.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 10, 2014

Adopting Older Kids Support Group

6:30pm – 8:30pm

Hands Across the Water, Ann Arbor

E-mail info@hatw.org for more information.

January 13, 2014

Muskegon Parent Group

5pm – 7pm

Muskegon DHS

For further information or to RSVP for events, please call Mary Doctor at 231.726.1200 ext. 216, Toll Free at 877.277.9378, or by e-mail at mdoctor@ccwestmi.org.

January 16, 2014

Parenting On Your Own: Nurturing Parenting

10:30am – 11:30am

Ypsilanti, MI

Call 734.997.1678 to pre-register for this free class.

January 21, 2014

Raising Healthy Families Support Group

6:30pm – 8:30pm

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Grand Rapids

E-mail registration@afsn.org or call 616.458.7945 to register.

January 22, 2014

Adoptive Parent Support Group

6pm – 8pm

Judson Center, Warren

For families in Macomb and surrounding counties who have adopted children from the foster care system. Dinner and childcare is provided, so please RSVP at 810.732.8510 or contact Pam Ferguson directly at 313.617.9126.

January 27, 2014

Advanced Parenting for Challenging Children

6pm – 9pm

For families who have completed the eight week APCC classes.

Meets the fourth Monday of each month; 6 – 9 pm. E-mail registration@afsn.org for additional information.

February 1, 2014

Fenton MARE Match Party

12pm – 3pm

E-mail Ann Riggs at ann_riggs@judsoncenter.org to register.

February 13, 2014

Adoptive Family Support Meeting and Adopted Youth Club

6pm – 8pm

Judson Center, Ann Arbor

Come have dinner with other families who have adopted. After dinner we'll split into two separate discussion groups. Please RSVP to Tracy Kapusansky at 734.545.3831 or tracy_kapusansky@judsoncenter.org.

February 15, 2014

Holland MARE Match Party

11am – 2pm

E-mail Ann Riggs at ann_riggs@judsoncenter.org to register.

February 17, 2014

Cedar Springs Support Group

6:30pm – 8pm

For families who live in or near Cedar Springs. Meets the third Monday of each month; 6:30 – 8 pm. Contact Deidra at 616.558.4263 or e-mail dartecki@afsn.org.

February 25, 2014

D.A. Blodgett – St. John's SNAP

(Special Needs Adoptive Parents)

6pm – 8pm

Parent led group for families who have adopted through D.A. Blodgett - St. John's. Meets the fourth Tuesday of each month; 6 – 8 pm. Contact Deidra at 616.558.4263 or e-mail dartecki@afsn.org.

March 8, 2014

Brighton MARE Match Party

Time TBA

E-mail Ann Riggs at ann_riggs@judsoncenter.org to register.

March 13, 2014

Adoptive Family Support Meeting and Adopted Youth Club

6pm – 8pm

Judson Center, Ann Arbor

Come have dinner with other families who have adopted. After dinner we'll split into two separate discussion groups. Please RSVP to Tracy Kapusansky at (734) 545-3831 or tracy_kapusansky@judsoncenter.org.

View a comprehensive list of events at www.mare.org.