we now proclaim our tRuTh
substance BEAUTY and value
as ourselves without apology

or compromise

Transracial Adoption as Continued Oppression:
Modern Practice in Context

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ABSTRACT

Transracial adoption has existed as a mode of forced displacement and oppression throughout the history of the United States. Starting with Italian children, who were once racialized as non-white, non-white children in the United States have undergone systemic oppression resulting in forced separation from their biological parents. The displaced children have typically been placed with white parents who have not been adequately prepared to provide the culturally competent, trauma-informed care that the children need. As a result, transracially adopted children have historically struggled to form a sense of identity and have faced a wide range of physical and mental health vulnerabilities. Part I of this paper will present an overview of how transracial adoption has been implemented throughout U.S. history, discussing both past models (such as the Orphan Train) and contemporary models (such as the foster care system, domestic private adoptions, and the global adoption industry). Part II will draw connections between past and present implementations of transracial adoption, illustrating that the phenomenon is best understood as a continuation of previous forms of oppression. Part III will propose a number of recommendations for social workers to facilitate better outcomes for transracial adoptees.

PART I: HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION
PREVIOUS MODELS OF ADOPTION
THE ORPHAN TRAIN

In order to understand the current landscape of transracial adoption, it is important to understand the historical context of the Orphan Train, which provided one of the first examples of regulated, systemic transracial adoption. At the beginning of the 19th century, the United States moved towards institutionalizing children who were without care (Hill, 2006). Children were placed into poor houses, often sharing quarters with adult criminals and intellectually disabled individuals. In 1824, the New York House of Refuge for Juvenile Offenders was created by the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. As the first supervised living space for children without care, the New York House of Refuge for Juvenile Offenders served as a model for other states looking to improve the wellbeing of children. Institutions similar to orphanages were created specifically for children, although it is worth noting that very few orphanages were created to serve Black children. While Black individuals south of the Mason-Dixon line were enslaved, free Black children in the North often found care in informal kinship networks amongst other Black individuals (McGowan, 2010; Woodward, 2016). As a result, Black children were excluded from this early move towards the institutionalization of children without caregivers.

In 1854, Charles Loring Brace, founder of the New York Children's Aid Society, started what would later become known as the Orphan Train. Brace and his contemporaries sent impoverished white children, some of whom were orphans, to live with families primarily in the Midwest (McGowan, 2010). Over the next seven decades, during which the nation saw the Civil War, Reconstruction, and World War I, almost 200,000 white children journeyed from densely populated eastern cities to rural midwestern towns. Brace's effort to place children into homes was replicated in numerous cities across the U.S.

Although an improvement from previous models, the Orphan Train is not without its criticisms. Many children who journeyed on the Orphan Trains were impoverished Irish and Italian immigrants departing from developing northeastern cities. Through the Orphan Train, children who were mostly Catholic were placed into Protestant homes across the Midwest (McGowan, 2010). Not only were these children displaced from their homes into an environment with different religious beliefs, but many experienced socioeconomic challenges, severe abuse, and overwhelming pressures of assimilation (Graham & Gray, 1995). While some shared fond memories, many described intense isolation and bewilderment (Graham & Gray, 1995). It is also worth noting that Irish and Italian Americans were racialized as non-white until the early 1900s (Luconi, 2021). Irish and Italian children were forced to assimilate to unfamiliar families and culture, and experienced a power imbalance within their adoptive families. Opponents of Brace's efforts contend that sending children on the Orphan Train was similar to forcing youth into indentured servitude (Gray & Graham, 1995). They also note that the families that received the children did not provide the means for the children to grow in their own religious faith, causing further cultural disruption (McGowan, 2010). This criticism continues to be echoed in contemporary accounts of trauma within the private adoption industry (Roberts, 2020).

SLAVERY AND JIM CROW LAWS

While Italians and Irish people were regarded as non-white in the age of the Orphan Train, Black and Indigenous children experienced even greater forms of abuse, isolation, and displacement. For Black people, the history of transracial adoption can be traced to slavery. Since the forced arrival of Black people into this country, Black children have systematically been separated from their parents for the benefit of white enslavers. Black children living amidst the horrors of enslavement were viewed as chattel and often cared for by kinship networks rather than their biological parents (McGowan, 2010). Hundreds of thousands of Black children were separated from their biological parents or orphaned by the practices of slavery. Though the number of free Black people in northeastern cities greatly increased in the late 1800s, Black children

were excluded from the Orphan Train, and very few orphanages existed to explicitly serve Black children. Black children were instead cared for informally by other members of their community. It is important to understand this historical context of forced separation as we continue to discuss transracial adoption and its impact on Black people.

Jim Crow laws and racism prevented the transracial placement of Black children until the late 1960s. After the Jim Crow era, transracial adoption expanded significantly, with Black children making up a major contingent of adoptees in the 1970s. The number of Black children in white homes increased so much that in 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) released a statement warning that transracial adoption would prevent Black children from developing a "total sense of themselves" and "sound projection of their future" (National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972, p.1). As a result, many policies allowing transracial placement of Black children were reversed until 1994, when the Multiethnic Placement Act was passed (Barn, 2013; Quadagno, 1996).

NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOLS AND THE INDIAN ADOPTION PROJECT

Indigenous persons have been victims of genocide, forced displacement, and family disruption since the creation of what is now known as the United States. However, it was not until the 1860s that the Bureau of Indian Affairs formally created its first residential school. Indigenous children were abducted by government workers and forced to attend residential schools whose primary function was to forcibly assimilate the children through "killing the Indian" (Gram, 2016; Bombay et al., 2014, p. 322). Many were taken from their parents and adopted by white families, often without notifying the child's family or tribe. These atrocities caused lasting, significant harm: residential school attendance has been linked to increased substance use and mental health problems for both survivors and their descendants (Kawamoto, 2001).

From 1959 to 1967, the United States Children's Bureau worked with the Child Welfare League of America to increase the number of children available to be adopted through the creation of the Indian Adoption

Project (Engel, 2012). Due to an increase in demand by white couples without children and decreased numbers of white infants in need of adoption, the Bureau and the Child Welfare League worked to satisfy the needs of white couples by removing roughly 700 Indigenous children from their homes and placing them into the homes of white parents ready to adopt (Engel, 2012). Though the program officially ended in 1967, the prevalence of placing Indigenous children transracially continued for almost another decade. Unfortunately, records of adoptions during this time period confound the exact number of children, so the total number of children displaced may never be known (Engel, 2012). The Indian Adoption Project aimed to facilitate transracial placements of Indigenous children during a time when same-race placements were considered general practice.

Of the cases documented in 1968 through 1979, the Association on American Indian Affairs found that nearly a third of Indigenous children were separated from their families. Furthermore, 90% of these children were placed in white homes (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). Their findings, coupled with political action from the American Indian Movement, led to the 1978 passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act (Barn, 2013; Engel, 2012). The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) provided an avenue for tribes to actively engage in the cases of Indigenous children to "protect the best interest and promote the stability and security of Indian tribes" (Indian Child Welfare Act, 1978). This legislation ensures the livelihood of Indigenous tribes and traditions by creating protections for Indigenous children and legally obligating caseworkers to notify and involve the child's parents and tribe in court proceedings.

CURRENT MODELS OF ADOPTION

In some respects, the landscape of transracial adoption in 2022 has changed since the models proposed in the previous section. The Orphan Train, the Indian Boarding Schools, and the Indian Adoption Project have been largely replaced by the foster care system and the private adoption industry. In the 21st century, international adoptions (especially from East Asia) have also become prominent (Budiman & Lopez, 2017). However, the overall dynamic of forced displacement

and assimilation continues to the present day and historic cycles of harm continue to be replicated in the present. The following section will discuss contemporary forms of adoption and draw parallels between the harms committed in both current and past models.

THE SYSTEM

The child welfare system is responsible for promoting and preserving the wellbeing of children (Roberts, 2020). While each state has its own public agencies, these agencies often partner with private organizations to provide services to children and their families. Central to the system is mandated reporting, which requires specific professionals such as educators, coaches, medical professionals, and others who work with children to report to their state any suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Fluke et al., 2003). Reports are then investigated by social service personnel who may develop safety plans for the children. Safety plans may involve minimal interventions, such as the provision of services, or potentially drastic interventions, including the removal of the child (Hill, 2006). While in modern times, a stronger emphasis is placed upon reunification, policies like the Adoption and Safe Families Act make reunification challenging by providing financial bonuses to state agencies for placing children into adoptive homes (Cilia, 2021). Due to its past record of separating families, the child welfare system has been referred to as the "family regulation system" by civil rights activist Dorothy Roberts, who advocates for the abolition of the child welfare system entirely (Roberts, 2020).

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Of those in foster care, two percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native, one percent are Asian, 21% are Black or African American, and 21% are Hispanic (Children's Bureau, 2020). These racial ethnic groups make up 1.3%, 5.9%, 13.4% and 18.5% of children in foster care respectively (United States Census Bureau, 2021). These proportions are similarly reflected in the demographics of children waiting to be adopted. Of children who were adopted with public agency involvement in the 2019 fiscal year, 50% were non-white, although white people make up over 75% of the United States population (Children's Bureau, 2020).

Of children adopted from foster care last year, 28% were transracial adoptions, a 22% increase since 2005 (Assistant Secretary for Planning and Intervention, 2020).

Racially skewed participation rates in the foster care system can at least partially be attributed to biased investigation into accusations of neglect and physical abuse (Harris & Hacket, 2008; Dettlaff et al., 2020). Latinx families, and to an even greater extent Black families, are more likely to be investigated than their white counterparts (Hill, 2006; Fluke et al., 2003). Even when comparing only children who have experienced maltreatment, Black children are still almost 36% more likely to be removed from their homes than their white counterparts (Hill, 2006). Harris and Hacket (2008) discuss how subjectivity in the assessment of cases creates opportunities for racial bias, ultimately impacting case outcomes in nearly every interaction within the family regulation system.

By the early 1990s, the number of African-American and Indigenous children in foster care greatly increased. Ultimately, in 1994, due to the large number of children in need of care and shifting racial ideologies, the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was passed. After much contested debate from stakeholders in all racial ethnic groups, especially the NABSW, MEPA was passed to facilitate the timely placement of children removed from their homes (Barn, 2013; Quadagno, 1996). The Act prohibits agencies from refusing placements due to the race, nationality and ethnicity of either the child or the prospective parents.

IMPACT OF FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

An unintended consequence of MEPA's colorblind stance is that foster care agencies are unable to assess prospective white parents' cultural and racial responsiveness. While MEPA only applies to foster care agencies, the convention of colorblind adoption spread to other institutions. Private adoption agencies, social workers, and other professionals are hesitant to discuss the implications of forming mixed-race families with white prospective parents because the practice depends on the continued recruitment of prospective parents. As a result, "keeping white parents comfortable becomes a priority" (Raleigh, 2018).

Race matters and the racial-ethnic socialization of Black and Indigenous children of color raised by white families has and continues to be highly contested (Barn, 2013; Quadagno, 1996). Some scholars of adoption argue that "children, whenever possible, should be placed with parents of the same race or ethnicity" (Andujo, 1998, p. 534). When such placements are not possible, bi-culturalism offers an alternative approach to racial-ethnic socialization. Bi-culturalism, in which the culture(s) of adopted children are integrated into the adoptive household, leads to the development of ecological competence both in white and non-white environments for the non-white child. Similarly, Deberry et al. (2003) found that transracial adoptees whose adoptive parents fostered connection to their birth culture had better psychological adjustment and positive experiences regarding the process of developing their racial and ethnic identities.

Though white adoptive parents have begun to shift away from emphasizing assimilation and colorblindness, instead acknowledging the importance of racial identity formation, there is still much to be concerned about (Barn, 2013; Lee, 2003). Adoption is a fundamentally traumatic experience. Verrier (1993) stated that separation has a detrimental impact on adoptees' relationships throughout their lives. Adoptees are also four times more likely to attempt to take their life than their non-adopted counterparts (Keyes et al., 2013). Possible suicide risk factors impacting adoptees include mental illness, substance use, trauma experienced by biological parents, trauma experienced by the adoptee early in their life, and decreased sense of belonging (Keyes et al., 2013). A decreased sense of belonging contributes to depression and increases the risk of suicide (Fisher et al., 2015).

Adoption has a long history of shame and secrecy, and transracial adoption is the most visible form of adoption (Lee, 2003). Transracial adoptees face many challenges in regards to racial identity formation, and many struggle to find belonging. Andujo (1998) found a direct correlation between the adoptee's positive sense of self and the efforts their adoptive parents took to facilitate socialization with individuals from the adoptee's own racial or ethnic group. Deberry et al. (1996) found a positive correlation between connection to birth culture and

psychological wellbeing when studying African-American transracial adoptees. Similarly, Yoon (2000) found that in Korean-born adoptees, parental support of the adoptee's racial ethnic identity development predicted more positive psychological adjustment of the adoptee. Recent studies validate these findings, as Montgomery and Jordan (2018) found in their systematic research synthesis. Ultimately, racial-ethnic socialization practices that celebrate differences, prepare children to navigate racial discrimination, and encourage building relationships with one's birth culture are linked to healthy adoptee outcomes (Montgomery & Jordan, 2018). It is this understanding of the nature of adoption that underscores the importance of the third mandate of MEPA.

The third and final mandate of MEPA requires agencies to recruit racially diverse prospective parents, reflecting the demographics of children in care (Barn, 2013; Quadagno, 1996). In order to become licensed care providers, prospective parents must have strong references and must meet standards regarding income, health status, and legal history (Raleigh, 2018). As the NABSW pointed out several decades ago, systemic racial barriers like socio-economic inequality and mass incarceration, coupled with fears of surveillance and outright racial discrimination from agencies, continue to deter or prevent Black and Indigenous Persons of Color (BIPOC) from becoming formal foster or adoptive parents (National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972; Woodward, 2016). Despite this, informal kinship networks within communities, as an alternative to transracial adoption, continue to offer transracially adopted children a means to mature and be cared for within their own cultural contexts (McGowen, 2010).

PT II: PARALLELS BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT MODELS

Despite changes to the way transracial adoption is implemented, the historic harms of the adoption process continue to be perpetuated. Transracial adoption today serves as an institution that continues the forced assimilation and cultural genocide of marginalized groups, as it severs all legal and cultural ties children may have to their birth families and culture. The following section will draw connections between the traumas inflicted in historic and current modes of adoption.

MEETING PARENTS' INTERESTS

The core purpose of adoption should be to provide displaced children with safe and loving homes. Yet, adoption historically and currently has been publicized as a way for potential parents to benefit. For example, during Midwest labor shortages in the 1860s, adoption was advertised as a way for families to acquire additional assistance on their farms (Graham & Gray, 1995). Adoption has always been advertised as a way for parents to have children, without always encouraging understanding of the traumatic circumstances that led to children experiencing separation from their birth families.

One modern development in this regard is the Evangelical Orphan Care Movement, which started in 2000. This movement is rooted in the New Testament passage James 1:7, which advocates for adoption as the divinely mandated solution to the global "Orphan Crisis." Yet ironically, out of the eight million children currently living in orphanages, it is estimated that 90% have at least one living parent (Van Doore, 2016). There are considerable theological critiques of this view, perhaps most significantly that in contrast to the legal adoption system in the United States, in Biblical narratives of adoption, the adoptee's biological connection to their lineage is maintained (Smolin, 2012). Regardless, the evangelical movement's impact has been undeniable and the Christian Alliance for Orphans, which partners with over two hundred organizations, reported facilitating and impacting the formation of "foster, adoption and orphan care ministries" at over 800 churches in 2020 (Christian Alliance for Orphans, 2021). Unfortunately, the movement as a whole has failed to critique the coercion and commodification present within the foster and adoption industry, instead clinging to a narrative that purports the legal and cultural cultural separation of children from their biological families to be "God's plan" for the creation of their own families (Smolin, 2012). This mindset betrays the fundamental purpose of adoption: to provide displaced children with safe, permanent homes.

COERCION

During the Orphan Train era, biological mothers were pressured or

forced into giving up their children (McGowan, 2010). Today, similar experiences of coercion can be found in the stories of birth mothers considering the private adoption industry. Coercion can take the form of withholding information or resources, as well as subtle or explicit pressure to make a certain choice. This coercion can come from individuals within the pregnant person's personal life, or from service providers such as social workers (Castle, 2014). In recent years, there has been a growing number of claims and sensational headlines asserting that birth mothers in the United States who received financial support during their pregnancies from prospective adoptive parents felt they had to go through with relinquishment against their wishes (Root, 2021). Some mothers in closed adoptions also express regret that they only learned the full legal ramifications of relinquishment after the procedure had been finalized (Weller & Hosek, 2020). Similar stories can be found around the globe, where medical bills or fraud may be used to coerce mothers into giving up their children (Graff, 2008). This coercion, similar to that experienced by impoverished parents whose children were sent on Orphan Trains, is all too common.

COMMODIFICATION

To this day, Black children remain the cheapest children to adopt, as well as the most abundant in the foster care system (Quiroz, 2008; Woodward, 2016). Surveys of white parents indicate hesitation to adopt Black children, as some view the divide between Black and white too vast. In response, white parents have opted to domestically adopt "multicultural" children or to adopt non-white children from Asia or South and Central America (Sweeney, 2013; Woodward, 2016). Kubo (2010) suggested that adoptive parents may view adoption of foreign children as "baggage free," and that their foreignness allows adoptive parents to incorrectly perceive them as raceless and thus closer to whiteness (p. 269). White adoptive parents desiring children who are proximal to whiteness is both a perpetuation and a consequence of a racial hierarchy that posits Blackness at the bottom (Sweeney, 2013). Numerous adoption agencies even list percentages of the child's racial and ethnic makeup to pander to a growing preference for multiracial children, in the process clearly distinguishing multiracial from Black (Sweeney, 2013; Woodward, 2016). Such listings and financial incentives

not only commodify children in a manner eerily similar to the auction block, but they also provide a concrete visualization of continued racial disparities disregarding that all men are created equal, and illustrate how the domestic and international adoption system caters to white interests (Raleigh, 2012).

International transracial adoptive placements grew in popularity after the Vietnam War, during which U.S imperialism led not only to widespread destabilization but also the orphaning of numerous children who were to eventually become international transracial adoptees (Barn, 2013). Widespread adoption of Asian-born children, alongside the civil rights movement, shifted societal views of what families could look like. Concurrently, domestic adoptions involving Indigenous and African-American Black children began to become more commonplace (Lee, 2003). Despite mixed-race families becoming more common, there remains a strong demand among prospective adoptive parents for white infants (Woodward, 2016). Since unmarried motherhood has become more socially acceptable in the United States, the amount of adoptable white babies has dramatically decreased and prospective parents seeking infants continue to turn abroad to adopt (International Adoption Rate in U.S. Doubled in the 1990s, 2003). However, international adoptions have been declining in the last ten years, due in part to concerns about the ethics of the practice, including the creation of "paper orphans," children forcibly taken and sold to orphanages in order to satisfy demand for babies (Van Doore, 2016).

PT. III RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

As families are formed and are constantly changing, so too must our rhetoric and practices regarding transracial adoption change. To start, within social work education there must be explicit recognition of the field's historic and continued complicity in and perpetuation of the oppression of children and families of color through surveillance, commodification, forced displacement and removal, and failure to consider the socio-emotional ramifications of transracial placement (Dettlaff et al., 2020). For far too long, the subjective biases of service providers have impacted the experiences of families of color coming into contact with the family regulation system, leading to

disproportionate removals and devaluing the importance of biological human relationships, thus disregarding social work core values (Harris & Hackett, 2008). Social workers must work to unlearn and unpack their biases as well as to critically interrogate their role in the adoption process, from the removal of children to placement.

Much has been written about the lack of culturally competent services available to parents of color struggling with substance use or mental health problems. Many scholars have touted family preservation services as a means to decrease the amount of children in need of out of home care (Harris & Hackett, 2008). Unfortunately, service providers have failed to empower and equip BIPOC folks to care for members of their own communities in need. In fact, many have done the opposite, causing harm and adverse effects to these communities (Roberts, 2008). One must be cognizant of the fact that the carceral surveillant nature of the family regulation system poses a real threat to the safety of all BIPOC folks who come in contact with it, even prospective foster or adoptive parents. The fact of the matter is that there remains a significant number of BIPOC children in need of care (Dettlaff et al., 2020). Social workers and other service providers should then work not only to fulfill the third mandate of MEPA, but also to work to eliminate the previously named racial barriers through abolition of the prison industrial system and major economic overhaul through the expansion of safety nets (Dettlaff et al., 2020).

In regards to placement, social workers must reject colorblindness and attitudes of racial ambivalence which act as a form of violent erasure (American Psychological Association, 2017). Instead, social workers should acknowledge the adverse effects of transracial placement on racial ethnic identity formation. When transracial placements do occur, social workers have a duty to equip white parents to more effectively adopt attitudes of biculturalism and underscore the importance of active anti-racist and trauma-informed parenting. Social workers, as current brokers of placements and adoptions, are uniquely positioned to help white parents deconstruct attitudes of white saviorism and unlearn racist behaviors (Raleigh, 2018). Transracially placed and adopted children are not responsible for their white parents' education. Transracially placed adopted children, like all children, are deserving of safety and security.

Social workers are often held as "experts'' in the child welfare and adoption field by the general public. However, the profession's reliance on academia can lead to discounting the true experts of adoption: adoptees. This is not to ignore the vital impact of abolitionist scholars such as Roberts in the discourse regarding child-welfare and transracial placements, nor to ignore the outcomes of advocacy from organizations like the upEND Movement that seek to abolish the family regulation system, but rather to say that the common narrative around transracial adoption must be shaped first and foremost by those who have experienced transracial adoption (Dettlaff et al., 2020; Roberts, 2008). Social workers must actively look outside the ivory tower, and elevate the voices and wisdom of transracial adoptees themselves.

 The lived experiences of adoptees have long served as sources of entertainment; however these popular narratives tend to focus on the good-feeling parts of adoption and seldom is critique given to the circumstances leading to initial separations (McKee, 2019). Similarly, adoptees themselves must constantly mitigate and negotiate their own understanding of their lived experiences and origins, due to a lack of information regarding their own histories (McKee, 2019; Wills, 2015). However, through the creation of self0narratives, such as life-writings— that is, the recordings of memories and experiences—adoptees can "de-essentialize truth claims," which is necessary for negotiating their understanding of self in the absence of factual knowledge of their origins (Wills, 2015). The creation of Zines, a form of participatory media, can also facilitate development of personal and collective agency and deepen identity formation. A recent example is You Are Holding This, an "abolitionist zine for and by adopted and fostered people" (Martin, 2020; Artes et al., 2021).

In addition to reclaiming narratives for themselves through the written word and artistic expression, adoptees also have taken to social media platforms to express their feelings and seek belonging and community. Adoptees can be found speaking out under hashtags such as #adopteevoices and #adopteevisibility. Suh (2021) found Korean adoptees used Instagram to refocus adoption narratives on their own agency, as well as to reclaim that agency for themselves. The same can

be said for transracial adoptees of other races, especially after years of intense racial justice movements in response to anti-Black police violence and anti-immigrant rhetoric, as evidenced in viral articles in leading U.S. newspapers (Hatzipanagos, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Children of color end up in white families in numerous ways: placement through a private domestic adoption agency, adoption out of foster care, or adoption internationally. In each case, adoption is trauma (Verrier, 1993). Understanding the impact of adoption trauma and focusing on the survivors of this trauma––adoptees—is crucial to reshaping and decolonizing the narratives of transracial adoption. As long as adoption remains a multimillion dollar industry driven by predominantly white couples of higher socioeconomic status and impacted by foreign and domestic policies, the practice of transracial adoption is impossible to separate from cultural genocide, forced assimilation, and imperialism (Raleigh, 2018; Lee, 2003). Transracial adoption must be understood as a continuation of historical modes of oppression.

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Parenting in Racially, Culturally, and Ethnically Diverse Adoptive Families

In the past, the prevailing advice for parents who adopted children and youth of a race, culture, or ethnicity different from theirs was to love and raise them from a "colorblind" perspective,[1] as if the races, cultures, and ethnicities of the young people were not an important part of their identities. But adults who were raised with this approach and other experts say that when parents ignore their child's racial, cultural, and ethnic origins, the journey to a healthy identity can be lonely, confusing, and even traumatic. Parenting a child who comes from a different racial, cultural, or ethnic background from your own requires continuous learning, since you will not have the same life experiences as your child.

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[1] "Colorblindness" is a racial ideology that involves treating people equally without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. It is problematic because it minimizes racism, systemic inequities, and the impact of race on one's outcomes. It also dismisses crucial elements of an individual's identity.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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PROTECTING CHILDREN ■ STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

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Learning about another culture is a process that requires ongoing work, open-mindedness, and a commitment to growth. Understanding and acknowledging differences in race, culture, and ethnicity and playing an active role in creating a home and family life that reflect your child's heritage are critical steps in parenting in diverse adoptive families.

This factsheet provides information to help you and your family support your child in developing a healthy racial, cultural, and ethnic identity and live a vibrant multicultural life. It discusses the importance of examining your thoughts and biases, as well as those of your whole family, and preparing your child to live in a society where race has a major impact on individual lives.

Defining Racially, Culturally, and Ethnically Diverse Adoptive Families

An adoption in which adoptive parents are of a different race, culture, and/or ethnicity from their children is usually referred to as a "transracial adoption" or "transcultural adoption." Adoption agencies, your child's caseworker, or other child welfare professionals may use these terms when discussing relevant training or services to support your family. But, for many people, these terms do not address the depth or complexities associated with their lived experience. For the purposes of this publication, we use "racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse families" to best describe the common realities of people raised in such families.

Race, culture, and ethnicity are terms that people often confuse, but they are different. **Race** is a social construct used to group people. It is not based on genetics or science, and it is often based on physical appearance, social factors, and cultural background. **Culture** is taught to us by other human beings. Generally speaking, we learn culture by speaking with and learning from our elders, people who pass down and share information, generation to generation. **Ethnicity** refers to one's racial, national, Tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural background. Ethnicity is typically defined by a group's cultural identity, while race is typically determined by physical traits.

For more terms related to race, culture, and ethnicity, see the glossary at the end of this publication.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STARTING A MULTICULTURAL FAMILY

Starting a multicultural family by adopting a young person with a different racial, cultural, or ethnic background from your own is a big decision that requires a lot of soul searching and preparation before adoption even occurs. Multicultural adoptions can be great opportunities for both adoptive parents and adopted youth to learn, grow, and embrace a rich, multicultural lifestyle. However, these types of adoptions can create challenges for adopted youth, such as a lack of connection to their birth culture, challenges developing or understanding their identity, or even racism from adoptive relatives.

It is easy for well-intentioned adoptive families to take on a "love is enough" perspective, but the reality is that for your child to thrive, you need to help them embrace their racial, cultural, and ethnic identities and navigate a world where racism can impact daily life. This involves extensive, ongoing work and a commitment to lifelong learning.

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"To me, when I think of what does a multicultural family look like, it looks as if everyone comes together with their different cultural and racial backgrounds but are respected and acknowledged and their activities that are associated with their cultures are done."—Antonica, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

PREADOPTION SOUL SEARCHING

Consider asking yourself some of the following questions to begin thinking about what it means to start a multicultural family:

- Am I willing to put in the work to learn and embrace a race, culture, or ethnicity different from my own, beginning far before an adoption occurs?

- Am I ready to ask questions and listen so I can understand my child's needs?

- Do I have meaningful, authentic connections or relationships in my daily life with people who share my child's racial, cultural, or ethnic background?

- Am I willing to continue to build new relationships with people who share my child's race, culture, and ethnicity, including members of their birth family and community?

- Am I willing to have difficult conversations about the challenges that my child will face, including racism and discrimination, and help them navigate those challenges?

- Am I willing to be an unconditional champion for my child as they navigate challenges both within and outside of the home?

- Do I currently live in a diverse community where my child can see their race, culture, and ethnicity represented? If not, am I willing to potentially relocate?

- Am I willing to support my child as they develop their identity, even if it means they choose to distance themselves from me or form bonds with relatives and mentors other than me?

- How will my immediate and extended family respond to the adoption? Will they enthusiastically support and embrace my new multicultural and multiracial family? How will I support my child if they don't?
- Does my community value racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity, and will they affirm my adopted child?

Starting a multicultural family involves examining the thoughts and feelings of your network of immediate and extended family and friends. Since these people will be in your child's life, they also need to be ready to embrace them for who they are. If anyone in your extended family cannot accept your child as a family member, you should be prepared to reduce or eliminate contact with that person, because every young person deserves to be safe from racism in the haven of their family. Creating a strong family identity requires that all members feel included.

You will also need to be ready to educate your extended family about the different life experiences of your child. For example, because of White privilege, White relatives may not realize that minoritized children and youth do not experience many of the same advantages that White children experience

Adoption should be a mutual decision between the family and the young person being adopted whenever possible. Adoption is a big life change regardless of race, and when the family comes from a different racial, cultural, or ethnic group, a young person may have additional reservations. As you explore your adoption options, start having discussions about race, culture, and ethnicity right away. You may be able to ease potential

hesitation by asking the young person about their background and family, letting them know you value their individual story, and making clear your commitment to embracing their racial, cultural, and ethnic identity. You should also express your commitment to fighting racism, which includes being an ally, recognizing your own privilege, and continuing to learn. It is important to set the tone early in any foster or adoptive relationship by talking about needs and asking what you can do to make the environment better for the young person. The National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents has a video with tips for supporting children and youth as they transition from one home to another.

"I have had a hard time explaining to my parents that my kids do not enjoy some of the same privileges that White children with White parents (like my nieces and nephews) experience. For example, my mom will say, 'Just give him your credit card when he goes to the store.' And I've had to explain that I do not want to send a Hispanic male teenager in to a store with a credit card that has Jewish female name on it. I want to protect him from being questioned or accused of stealing the card."—Parent who adopted children of a different racial and cultural background

PUTTING IN WORK AS A WHOLE FAMILY

Adopting a child from a different race, culture, or ethnicity requires work from the whole family, not just the parents. All family members need to be ready to look inward, learn about race, and talk about race. They especially need to be ready to educate themselves on the background, traditions, and challenges of the race, culture, and ethnicity of their new family member so they are ready to incorporate their identity into the whole family.

One of the best things you can do to prepare for a prospective adoption is to start learning as much as you can. Read books and articles, watch videos, listen to podcasts, and explore other resources. Some suggested resources are listed at the end of this publication. In addition to learning about your child's race, culture, and ethnicity, it is important to explore the history of race, power, privilege, and oppression in the United States. You will also need to explore unconscious bias and the ways in which you may be unintentionally stereotyping various groups. The University of California San Francisco offers an unconscious bias training to help you and your family understand, assess, and address unconscious bias.

For younger children who are gaining a new sibling, consider age-appropriate ways to talk to them about race and differences they may notice. Keep things positive and emphasize that diversity is a good thing. The following section provides tips for talking about race and embracing a new family lifestyle.

"If you're going to love a child that is not the same race or culture, then you also have to be willing to be an advocate, a champion. . .Are you willing to challenge your family members or your friends and their ideologies and their beliefs?"— Justin, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

STRATEGIES FOR EMBRACING LIFE AS A RACIALLY, CULTURALLY, AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAMILY

Embracing a multicultural lifestyle is more a daily philosophy than a step-by-step checklist to follow. It also requires adaptability because many young people have different needs. For example, a 2-year-old may need more support understanding their race and identity than a 16-year-old who grew up fully immersed in their birth culture. It is important to tailor your approach to your child's unique experience and understand that it will take time to develop trust and understanding.

> "To a parent, my advice would be this: Be patient. Please understand that when the youth is coming into your home that is of a different race or cultural background than you, please be patient because you might not even know the walk of life that this young person had to go on to get here. So be patient with them. Understand that if they do seem guarded at first, that it is okay. Still give them time."
> —Antonica, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

The following provides concrete tips for embracing your multiracial and multicultural family and helping your child embrace their background.

TALKING ABOUT RACE, CULTURE, AND ETHNICITY

Talking about race and culture can be difficult, but it's especially important for adoptive parents of children and youth from a background different from their own. If you assume there are no differences between races, cultures, and ethnicities, or shouldn't be, you may create relational distance, silence, and mistrust between you and your child. Talk about race and your child's cultural heritage in positive terms, beginning when your child is young or whenever your child joins your family. By the time your child starts school, they will need tools to answer questions by themselves, including appropriate racial terms. You can make them aware of terms that are inappropriate and unacceptable so that they can recognize them and consider how to respond.

If you start the conversation when your child is young, they will have a level of comfort when they're older in discussing more complex issues, coping skills, and the risks of living in a society where race affects how people are treated. It may be helpful to discuss key historical events around race, culture, and ethnicity. Use these events to provide context for the racism they encounter.

Visit the Talking About Race webpage on the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) website for digital tools and other resources to help you have constructive conversations on race topics, including bias, antiracism, racial identity, and systemic oppression. Although NMAAHC focuses on African American culture, many of the resources and concepts apply broadly across race, culture, and ethnicity.

SUPPORTING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Helping your child develop their identity is among the most important roles you'll play in parenting a young person. Identity, including racial, cultural, and ethnic identity, develops over time and in response to a variety of experiences, both within and outside the family. It is critical that your individual identity does not dominate your child's understanding of their identity. Children and youth should never feel like they are the exception in their own life.

> "I have been placed with several other families that did not share the same ethnicity, race, or culture as me, but going through that experience, I have learned that there are some who are willing to listen and understand, and there are those who are just like, 'No, you're going to do this my way. This is my family. You're coming into my family. You have no choice but to accept this.' That is a dangerous situation, and that is not helping the youth learn more about themselves."—Antonica, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

To help your child on this journey, consider the following strategies:

- **Ask questions.** One of the best things you can do for your child is express genuine curiosity about their racial, cultural, and ethnic experience. For young children, encourage discussions about the differences they notice among family and friends. For older youth, ask about their past and what their race, culture, and ethnicity mean to them. Asking and listening can help them feel understood and have their needs met.

- **Go beyond superficial cultural differences.** Merely celebrating Chinese New Year or Kwanzaa, eating Ethiopian food, or watching a movie with Hispanic and Latino characters does not provide the human connections required for your child to build and maintain a real sense of belonging to and ownership of their cultural heritage.

- **Nurture connections with people who share your child's racial, cultural, and ethnic identity.** As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. You are doing your child a disservice if that village is not representative of their entire identity. It may be difficult for children and youth to develop a healthy sense of self without immersion in the culture of their birth families and communities. This may include maintaining relationships with members of the young person's birth family. More information is available in Child Welfare Information Gateway's _Helping Your Adopted Children Maintain Important Relationships With Family_.

- **Integrate culturally relevant traditions, holidays, and rituals into daily home life for the whole family.** This will help your child know that their cultural traditions are valued and considered as important as your own. Be sure to ask your child what traditions are important to them. Outside of holidays or formal gatherings, they may value informal traditions, such a big family dinner on Sundays or a backyard barbecue in the summer. Also, consider buying toys and books, listening to music, and watching movies that reflect your child's heritage.

- **Provide many and differing avenues for your child to express themselves and their needs.** It is not unusual for children and youth involved with child welfare to [chameleon](#), or adopt different behaviors or identities to blend into different settings and family dynamics. Giving them as many ways and opportunities as possible to express themselves can let them know it is okay to be themselves and speak up about what they need without fear of negative consequences.

> "There were a lot of moments where people's biases really did play into how I had to react as a person. . . I didn't want to make anyone else uncomfortable, even though I was constantly being made to feel uncomfortable about who I was or what I needed. And so that's not a great experience at all."—Justin, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

- **Talk to your child about racism.** It is very important to recognize that racism exists. Children and youth of color may need help recognizing racist behavior so that they know that it is wrong and not the fault of the person experiencing the behaviors. You should also discuss racism with older youth so you can understand their experience and support them when they encounter it. For cultures that have been historically oppressed and mistreated, healthy identity development requires understanding this history and developing coping skills that build resilience against hurtful societal messages. Youth need positive images and messages about their history and their communities to counterbalance negativity and institutional racism, and they need buy-in and engagement from their entire family. More information about preparing your child for racism is available in the Developing Strategies to Prepare Your Child for Racism section of this publication.

- **Strive to understand what life is like on a day-to-day basis for your child.** Know the possible danger that your child faces, particularly as a teenager or young adult of color (e.g., microaggressions, bullying by classmates, unfair punishment in school, being pulled over by the police).

- **Be mindful of age.** Forming a racial identity is an individual journey impacted by age and background. Children and youth will have varying connections to, memories of, and feelings toward their birth communities, and they will be at different stages of identity development. Younger children may require help understanding their identity, while older youth may benefit from you expressing curiosity and learning about the identity they have developed over the years, which may have evolved and changed over time.

- **Understand your own identity and how it may influence your child.** To help your child understand their racial and cultural identity, you need to understand your own. Especially for parents who are part of the dominant culture, developing that awareness takes self-exploration, understanding the environment in which you live, and considering what that means

for the needs of your child. Exploring the realities of race and the differences between races and how they impact individual lives in your culture will help you understand your own biases and prejudices. This may allow you to act in ways that can transform your family's usual way of doing things.

- **Respect and acknowledge** *all* **facets of your child's identity.** While it is essential to acknowledge your child's racial and cultural identity, make sure that it is not the only identity you are acknowledging. By overly emphasizing race, culture, or ethnicity, you run the risk of isolating your child or making them feel as though their race, culture, or ethnicity is more important than their individual identity. Parents should strive to embrace and understand everything that makes a young person who they are as an individual, including their personalities, hobbies, and interests.

"My momma was that one who was standing in the bathroom with me watching me do my hair. She was always so fascinated about how I did my hair. She genuinely loved it. She always used to say she felt bad she couldn't help me because she couldn't understand what she was supposed to do or the type of products I was supposed to use for my hair. But she was always the one to tell me, whatever I needed, she would get it for me. She will go with me. She was willing to be that active part of my life."—Antonica, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

Training and Related Skills for Parenting in Racially, Culturally, and Ethnically Diverse Families

The [National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents](#) (NTDC) is a free, comprehensive curriculum that addresses separation, loss, grief, trauma, and differences of race and culture in adoption and foster care. It is designed for families who are adopting through an intercountry or private domestic process as well as those fostering or adopting in or from the public child welfare system. Adoptive families who participate in the NTDC training program can expect to develop insights and strategies for parenting in diverse families.

The curriculum includes a self-assessment for families who are preparing to become foster, kinship, or adoptive parents; a classroom-based training designed to teach the foundations of parenting children and youth who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss; and a "Right-Time" training designed to provide accessible, ongoing access to tools and information as families, children, and youth grow.

MAKING CONNECTIONS WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

As a parent, you can make sure that you and your child have as many opportunities as possible to interact with people of your child's race, culture, and ethnicity. Your child may be more likely to feel connected and comfortable when their circle of playmates, peers, and trusted adults includes people who look like them, and you can learn a lot about your child's cultural community by being with other parents and adults who share your child's race, culture, or ethnicity. When possible, this may involve making connections with your child's birth family and community.

Our identities are influenced by exposure to different people and settings. As young people grow up, they internalize what they see and what they experience. Ensuring they are surrounded by people who share their background can help them internalize the language, values, and behaviors of their racial, cultural, or ethnic group. It can also allow them to codeswitch, or adjust their behavior and interactions with others, as they need or choose. They can learn important life lessons from adults of their same race, culture, or ethnicity about being a person of that background in American society. They may experience—with both young people and adults—positive social interactions and behaviors that can help them understand and believe they are fully members of their racial group, rather than feeling like outsiders.

Take a look at your community and surroundings and ask yourself how reflective it is of your child and whether

"You definitely have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, especially in the beginning stages. It definitely is harder before it gets easier for parents or caregivers. I would say my best advice is understand that you can't be everything for them, and that is okay, but the more you show that you can be a support and a bridge to other resources and other avenues and to other people, I guarantee your young person will appreciate you for that."—Justin, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

it is welcoming and comfortable for your child and family. This involves looking at your extended environment—for example, your neighborhood, stores where you shop, community organizations and social groups, places of worship, health-care providers, and schools. Schools are particularly important as most children and youth spend a significant portion of their developmental years in these academic settings—interacting with peers, making friends, and learning from teachers and others. Consider all aspects of your child's school experience, including the curriculum, faculty, student diversity, and culture of inclusiveness, to determine what kind of fit the school will be for your child.

Awareness of visible racial and ethnic differences starts at an early age. It's important to have connections to people who look like your child so your child doesn't assume you prefer people of your own race. Examining and reflecting on the diversity of your network and community is something that should occur well before an adoption. If your life and social activities do not already include significant connections to people who are the same race, culture, or ethnicity as your child, it will take time to create and nurture these connections. Suggestions for doing this include the following:

- Find a local community organization or a social, religious, or recreational group that includes individuals of all ages who share your child's racial, cultural, or ethnic background and where you can participate as a family on a regular basis.

- Explore relationships with your child's birth family, extended family, and home community. Navigating relationships with birth families can be challenging, but it can be enriching for your child to know where they come from.

- Ask your child what activities they like to do, places they like to go, and organizations they enjoy being part of.

- Ensure your usual social activities include people whose race, culture, and ethnicity are different from yours. You may also want to identify an informal mentor for yourself from your child's racial, cultural, or ethnic group. This can be a great opportunity to lean on existing meaningful relationships you have with friends and family from diverse backgrounds.

- Locate a specific place in your community—such as a school or playground or a social group, such as a parent network—where your child will be able to play or spend time with other children and youth of different races and backgrounds. You can also make connections with these parents. While there is also great benefit to adoptive parent groups, it is important not to limit your connections to those parents.

- Create a list of types of professionals you may need as a parent (e.g., pediatricians, dentists, racially specific hair care salons, child care providers) and review this list to see where you can find providers of your child's heritage to meet your family's needs. Asking other parents of your child's race, culture, or ethnicity for recommendations can be a great way to start conversations that may lead to making connections.

- Find TV shows, podcasts, or books that cater to members of your child's race or ethnicity—and be sure to watch, listen to, or read them regularly. This may even mean learning a new language. Begin collecting books, family videos, and art for your home that reflect your child's culture and diverse families and people in general.

"Accept that sometimes you might misread a situation or just plain 'get it wrong' when trying to understand your kid's experience. Have some humility in these cases. Apologize and keep learning."—Parent who adopted children of a different racial and cultural background

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR RACISM

Societies use race to create and reinforce racism, including class systems of power and privilege that benefit some and exclude or deny others. Furthermore, American society's historic preference for racial sameness in families prejudges racially and culturally diverse families. Strangers may make remarks or ask questions about your family because they see that you and your child do not look alike. Others may make racist comments. You need to prepare your child and yourself for both situations.

ADDRESSING AND FIGHTING AGAINST RACISM

Your job as a parent is to be part of difficult discussions with your child and to let them know it's okay to openly struggle with topics related to race. It is important to talk with your child about race and racism before they experience prejudice. For young people of color, this is a matter of when, not if. You may worry that if you point out differences or talk about racism, your child will feel less connected to you, but if parents are not able to discuss racial bias and differences, their child will be left to grapple with these critical issues alone with a limited worldview.

Your child should learn how to respond to the racism they may experience in different circumstances. For instance, responses to peers may be different from responses to authority figures or adult family members. These responses may range from ignoring the comment to seeking help or support from others to confronting the person or the system.

You are an important role model for your child against the effects of racism. Some strategies to address and fight against racism include the following:

- Fill your child with positive remarks and feelings about who they are and help them practice responding to racist comments.

- Talk about race and your child's cultural heritage in positive terms beginning when your child is young or when your child joins your family. This may help to build self-esteem that your child can draw on when they are older.

- Educate yourself and your child about the positive values of your child's racial, cultural, and ethnic history. Point out positive role models who share the same race, culture, or ethnicity as your child.

- Make clear your commitment to fight racism and teach antiracism as a whole family value. Work with your family to promote equality across the board—not just when it involves your child.

- Make a clear and visible commitment to authentically embracing and supporting people of other races.

- Ask about and listen to your child's experience with racism. This can let them know you are an advocate they can go to when they encounter racism.

Visit the NMAAHC Being Antiracist webpage to learn about types of racism, questions to ask yourself, and how to handle racist situations. For additional learning materials on antiracism, including books and essays, visit the website of Ibram X. Kendi, one of America's foremost historians and leading voices on antiracism.

> "I've seen so many people talk about—and there's some experiences that I've experienced as well—where you feel safe at home where love, acceptance, and understanding is promoted but not when you step foot outside of the home. As people, we all deserve to feel safe from bias and discrimination, and a young person deserves to know that when they don't feel safe outside of the home, that they will have a champion that will step out into the world with them and help them navigate it."—Justin, young person who experienced living with families of different racial and cultural backgrounds

FAMILY RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

You do not owe anyone the response to any question, but you may give your child, your child's siblings, and yourself permission to handle intrusive questions like "Where did he come from?" and "Whose child is he?" Talk with your child about strategies and responses they might want to try. You may not be with your child when they encounter others' questions or remarks, so it's important that they know appropriate ways to respond.

The _W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook_ curriculum provides practical guidance and specific examples that teach school-age children how to **W**(alk away), **I**(gnore), **S**(hare), or **E**(ducate) in response to questions or remarks

from others. The goal of this curriculum is to teach children and youth that they have control over how they respond to questions about their adoption experience. By working together to come up with a range of ideas about handling attention and curiosity from others, children, youth, and parents can be allies, reinforcing a feeling of belonging, and counteracting the message of isolation that can otherwise undermine a young person's sense of connection.

CONCLUSION

As the adoptive parent to a young person of another race, culture, or ethnicity, you will need to make ongoing, conscious efforts both inside and outside of your home to meet your child's needs and help them develop a healthy racial, cultural, and ethnic identity. You will never fully understand what life is like for someone of a different race, culture, or ethnicity, but one of the best things you can do for your child is listen and be willing to learn. Develop comfortable ways to talk with your child in age-appropriate conversations about diversity. Such conversations may support your diverse family's sense of unity, especially if your child feels isolated because they look different or they are in situations where they feel they need to explain or even defend the composition of their family. Nurture connections with people who share your child's race, culture, and ethnicity, including their birth family and members of their community when possible. If, together, your family develops a family identity that celebrates the individual members and the strengths of the unit, you and your child will be better prepared to face the challenges that the outside world may present.

GLOSSARY

The following terms are helpful to know when parenting in a racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse family:

Allyship: This is the role of actively supporting and advocating for the rights of a minority group as someone who is not a member of that group.

Code-switching: Code-switching involves adjusting your speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in response to different groups and settings. This adjustment for the comfort of others is often in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities.

Colorblind: Colorblindness is a racial ideology that involves treating people equally without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. It is problematic because it minimizes racism, systemic inequities, and the impact of race on one's outcomes. It also dismisses crucial elements of an individual's identity.

Colorism: This is discrimination based on skin color and valuing one skin color or shade over another, whether within your family, racial or cultural group, or across groups. "The Difference Between Racism and Colorism" discusses the impact skin color has on everyday life.

Cultural humility: Cultural humility includes recognizing of the importance of learning about, honoring, and incorporating your child's cultural identities; respecting families from varying races, religions, ethnicities, and economic statuses; understanding that you are always evolving and must remain open to new ideas; respecting differences in values of young people and birth families; and acknowledging that learning about other cultures is an ongoing process.

Culture: Culture is taught to us by other human beings. We learn our culture by speaking with and learning from our elders and other people who pass down and share information, often from generation to generation.

Diversity: This is the presence of differences among people with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, age, class, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and other characteristics.

Equity: Equity is the fair treatment of all while striving to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers. Equity differs from equality because it recognizes that people have different circumstances and require different resources, access, and opportunities to achieve equal outcomes.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity refers to one's racial, national, Tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural background. Ethnicity is typically defined by a group's cultural identity, while race is typically determined by physical traits.

Implicit bias/unconscious bias: Used interchangeably, implicit and unconscious bias are unconscious attitudes toward others often based on stereotypes. We all carry implicit bias and must learn to recognize it in ourselves to better understand and represent children and youth. Project Implicit offers free online tests that may reveal information you do not know about your own biases.

Inclusion: Inclusion is the state of being included within a group or structure. ("Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."—Verna Myers)

Intercountry adoption: An adoption in which adoptive parents adopt a young person from a country other than their own through permanent legal means and then bring that young person to their country of residence. More information on this type of adoption is available in Information Gateway's *Intercountry Adoption: What Do I Need to Know?*

Microaggressions: Microaggressions are common daily insults, invalidations, slights, or attitudes that communicate hostile racial judgments. They can be intentional or unintentional and can focus on race, culture, ethnicity, and adoption status. "If Microaggressions Happened to White People" shows how people of color face racial microaggressions every day.

Multiracial/multicultural parenting: This is an approach to parenting children and youth from different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds that honors your child's race, culture, and ethnicity in your existing family system, identifies strategies to help your child develop a positive and proud identity, and helps your child and family prepare for racism.

Race: Race is a socially defined concept used to give groups of people more power than others. Race is not based on genetics or science; however, it is sometimes used to designate groups of the human population with common physical characteristics, ancestry, or language.

Racial profiling: This occurs when someone is suspected of an offense based on their race, culture, or ethnicity rather than actual evidence.

Transracial adoption: Transracial adoption is an adoption in which the adoptive parents are of a different race, culture, and/or ethnicity from the child who is adopted.

White privilege: This is the societal privilege that benefits White people and provides them advantages that non-White people do not experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"25 Helpful Resources for Transracial Adoptive Families" includes links to books, podcasts, articles, videos, films, and TV series as well as organizations to follow on social media.

"Color Blind or Color Brave" is a TED Talk from finance executive Mellody Hobson about the importance of speaking openly about race.

EmbraceRace provides parents with articles, webinars, action guides, podcasts, and other resources to meet the challenges they face raising children and youth of color in a world where race matters.

NPR's *Code Switch* podcast covers the overlap of race, ethnicity, and culture—how they play out in our lives and communities.

Pact, an Adoption Alliance offers resources, support, and community for adoptive families to children and youth of color.

"Proactive Engagement: The Adoptive Parent's Responsibility When Parenting a Child of a Different Race" (National Council for Adoption) provides information about parenting children and youth of different age groups and suggests books, articles, tip sheets, and more for additional information.

Social Justice Parenting offers guidance for parenting as a form of activism and encourages parents to acknowledge their

influence in developing compassionate, socially conscious kids.

[Transracial Parenting Training](#) (North American Council on Adoptable Children) provides parents with training on race and cultural issues involved in adopting a young person of another race or culture.

PERSONAL ANECDOTES

["A Mother Reflects on Privilege, Adoption and Parenting 'Without Perfection'"](#) [audio] features one adoptive mother's story about how raising two Black sons—one adopted from foster care and the other from Haiti—and two White birth daughters helped her understand white privilege.

["Adopted Child: Strangers Asking Questions"](#) [video] provides tips on how to respond when strangers ask intrusive questions about your child, which sometimes means providing no response at all.

["Talking About Race With Our Children, Whatever Their Race"](#) offers suggestions about raising children and youth of another race from a White adoptive mother of a Latina daughter and a Black son.

[The Adoptee Next Door](#) [podcast] features one-on-one conversations between Angela Tucker, a Black woman adopted by White parents, and transracially adopted youth with the goal to elevate the adoptee voice and provide trustworthy open-source content to the public.

["The Realities of Raising a Kid of a Different Race"](#) discusses possible dangers children and youth of color encounter in their daily lives.

["Transracial & Transcultural Adoption: Preservation, Policy, and a Personal Perspective"](#) provides historic background of intercountry adoption in the United States and the personal story of an African American woman who was raised in a multiracial and multicultural family and is now parenting in a multicultural family.

["Transracial Adoption: Love Is Just the Beginning"](#) shares how one family handles being a family of African American, Native American, Latino, and European American individuals.

["White Parents, Raising Black Children - Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man - Ep. 6"](#) [video] features a conversation with a multiracial family about their struggles and lessons learned.

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