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INSIGHT FROM the EXPERTS



BEING ADOPTED TRANSRACIALLY

compiled from a video series from

USFCH

United States Foundation for Children of Haiti

watch at <https://www.facebook.com/USFCH/videos>

meet the experts
Adoptees
from transracial adoptions

On June 27, 2020, a panel of adoptees from Haiti and Korea began a series of FaceBook Live videos, recounting their own stories of being adopted outside their race, culture, and birth country.

This guide is created with their blessing in order to share their expertise more widely on this topic, by way of informing adoption and foster practice and parenting. Let's listen to these experts.

Panel participants include:

Lanise Antoine Shelley

Dr. Juliana Olson-Deans

Marie

Deanna Myers

Alli Phillips

Ibersalle Fallon

Sarah Smith

Andre

Schai Schairer

We encourage everyone to take time to watch the full video presentations, available for the public at:

www.facebook.com/USFCH/videos

The United States Foundation for Children of Haiti (USFCH) is a nonprofit that “supports our Haitian partners to provide health care, education and family care for children, orphans and impoverished families in Haiti.”

www.usfch.org/

before you adopt outside your race

consider

1

YOUR CIRCLES

Does your circle of family, friends, schools, community, church, and spheres of connection reflect the race and culture from which you are considering adoption? If not, why not?

If you haven't already built connections there, why haven't you?

If not, why are you considering adopting from a culture from which you have no friends, relationship, and connection?

How will you educate yourself on the experience of people from that culture within your community before making any adoption decisions?

How can you create cultural mentorship for your child? Your child needs to have their culture represented in their lives and have safe places to learn about who they are culturally.



before you adopt outside your race

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YOUR BIASES



Adoption language and culture have perpetuated the idea that adoptees are “lucky.” This leaves the child to bear a burden of indebtedness. Do you hold some of this mentality?

Seeing adoptive parents as charitable saints creates a savior mentality. No child should feel “saved by white people” or that they are their parent’s good deed. Do you feel pride about how adopting reflects on you?

What stereotypes, perceptions, and history do you have with the culture from which you are considering adoption? Be honest with yourself.

How much work have you done to acknowledge your privilege? Have you given thought to how your whiteness impacts your experience versus the experiences of racial minorities?

Are you ready and willing to work at standing against racism, microaggressions, and even subtle prejudices? Are you willing to educate yourself and equip your child for this in their own lives?

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3

THE WORLD & THE FUTURE

How will the world - their peers and others - respond to your child when you're not around? Prepare your child for the questions asked and perceptions of them away from you.

How will the world respond to your child when they are an adult? What does the future look like -- in college, the workplace, and in society?

It's a trauma (and reality) to have no place of belonging -- being seen as "not Korean" enough by Koreans, but too Korean for whites. How can you equip them to live in their cultural identity?

Do you have the courage for the rest of your lives to not just acknowledge their culture but give tools to navigate life, to immerse yourselves in their culture, to call out and model dealing with racism & stereotypes?

Can you hold space in your family, your home, and your community for the rest of your lives to be attuned to how they are impacted and affected by events and circumstances for people of their own culture?

Did you know...

...The term

transracial adoptee

is a term many adoptees don't like.

**They are fully
their
birth race
and
birth culture.**

The “transracial” part of their story was not their decision, but one made for them.

This decision shouldn't become their identity; “transracial” erases who they fully are.

Have the courage to let
the TRAUMA co-exist in your family.

This is the intrinsic reality in every adoption
or foster story - a family and future built from loss.

“Adoption builds
the new life on
the grave of the
old one.”

-Lanise A. Shelley

Children adopted outside their race face the trauma of

the loss of birth family

+

the displacement from their culture.

Don't erase me

HAIR

TAKE PROPER
CARE OF THE
CHILD'S
NATURAL HAIR &
DON'T LET
PEOPLE TOUCH IT
FROM CURIOSITY

PRIVACY

LET THE CHILD
OWN THEIR OWN
STORY. DON'T
SHARE IT.

DENYING THEIR FULL RACIAL IDENTITY

DON'T JUST ACKNOWLEDGE
THEY'RE BLACK
-- ACKNOWLEDGE
BLACKNESS &
WHAT THAT
MEANS

IGNORING THE TALKS

INITIATE
HARD
RACISM
TALKS

SAVIOR COMPLEX

DON'T HAVE ONE

Microrasgressions

that make adoptees feel they're being erased

**DOWNPLAY
THEIR
"BLACKNESS"**

YOUR PRIVILEGE
DOESN'T EXTEND
TO YOUR CHILD

**IGNORING
RACISM &
STEREOTYPES**

DON'T BLOW THESE
OFF. ACKNOWLEDGE
THEM & GIVE
TOOLS

**TRYING TO
LEVEL THE
PLAYING FIELD**

QUIT TRYING TO
LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD
OF WHITE SIBLINGS WITH
ADOPTED CHILD; IT'S
NOT THE SAME

**NOT TEACHING
THEIR CULTURE**

SEEK TUTORS OR
MENTORS SO YOUR
CHILD KNOWS THEIR
CULTURE
& LANGUAGE

**LIVING
IN ONLY
WHITE
SPACES**

DON'T RAISE YOUR
CHILD IN ONLY "WHITE"
SPACES

when adopting transracially

tips from the experts:

**“Your love cannot
protect me
from racism.”**

-- Schai Schairer

DO:

- Initiate conversations to express unconditional love that has no expiration date. Let them feel protected, committed to building a sense of felt safety.
- Have more courage than your child will need to deal with racism & adoption trauma.
- Let your child know you see and EMBRACE all of who they are - in their entirety.
- Affirm where they come from, teaching confidence in their black (or racial) identity. Talk about race in positive ways.
- Equip them and give them tools for dealing with racism and validate their reality.
- Show up for them, letting them see and know you don't tolerate racism.
- Initiate conversations about racism, microaggressions, prejudice, and find ways to help your child hear from people who look like them on these topics.

those with lived experiences

**“We don’t want to be the
bridge between our race
and the one we are
adopted into.”**

-- Dr. Juliana Olson-Deans

DON'T:

- Downplay or diminish your child’s blackness (or racial background) or make them feel they have to give up their racial identity in order to belong.
- Sugar coat or diminish the ways they encounter racism, microaggressions, & prejudice. Don’t make excuses for racist situations. Call it out.
- Erase the entirety of who they are. They need to be able to relate to their own self.
- Make it your child’s responsibility to make you comfortable with their full identity.
- Have your child fit into your family identity. CHANGE your family culture to include their racial background, culture, and language.
- Make your kids live in only white spaces or make them feel “othered.”
- Dismiss your child’s feelings or perceptions. Validate them and give space for them to process. Acknowledge that racism and prejudice are NOT fair.



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Our vision is to be a healing adoptee community who revolutionize the systems that impact them. Adoption and foster care have historically catered to decision-makers rather than being transparent, adoptee centered, and trauma informed. We believe adoptees have the right to information and ownership of their own story, with a sense of felt safety and belonging. We seek to hold space for adoptees to co-exist with all the chapters of their story, with opportunity to revolutionize the systems that impact them.

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