

Helping Members Build Families Through Adoption Since 1982



Premier National Network of Adoption Professionals

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Kamilah Bunn
Chief Executive Officer
Adoption Exchange Association



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TODAY'S SESSION
Better Preparing Adoptive Families to be Anti-Racist

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Better Preparing Adoptive Families to be **Anti-Racist**

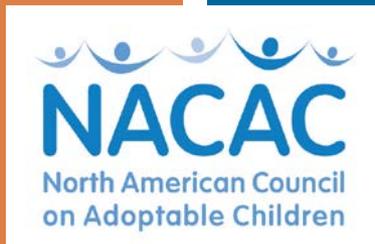


Barb Clark



Kim Stevens

North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)



Setting the Stage

- Many agencies/counties include transracial parenting training in pre-placement training
- Adolescent and adult transracial adoptees still report not being prepared to face the world as a person of color
- What are we missing in pre-placement training?
- What should be included in post-placement training?



Most agencies are providing the info on hair and skin care differences

This is a very important topic, but we can't stop there...

Survey of Parents from Transracial Families



- 45% of parents surveyed received no training on transracial parenting
- Of the 55% who received training, only 12% reported the training was enough and helpful.

- The majority of those reporting state only 30-60 minutes of training was focused on race
- 75% did not receive any post-placement training and only 1 parent reported receiving adequate training

Parent Comments



- “Child welfare skimmed the surface. They did not ask the hard questions.”
- “Did not force prospective parents to sit in the discomfort of white privilege and what that means and how it will impact our children of color.”
- “I don’t think enough emphasis was put on how hard it is for the children.”
- “We missed everything relevant to raising a black child to feel good about being black. Child welfare does a TERRIBLE job preparing white families to adopt transracially. It is not enough to read a few books and have a few black friends. As white parents we have a moral obligation to be educated and informed and actively anti-racist long before child welfare should consider placing a child of another color with us.”

What needs to be covered



- White privilege
- Implicit bias
- The importance of recognizing racist systems and participating in changing them
- Families shouldn't have to spend hours upon hours searching for resources, we need to provide it for them
- The dangers of “colorblindness”
- Strategies for managing issues in extended family
- Developmental stages and ages, and how race impacts children at those various ages

Shared Parenting and Anti-Racism



- White parents of black children have additional responsibilities
 - Pre-existing stance of cultural humility essential
- Requires ongoing courageous, honest, humble conversations
- Neutrality is not an option
- Assuming stance of color-blindness is not an option
- Potential increase in divided loyalties for children and youth
 - Unchecked, can lead to relationship breakdown into adulthood
- Honesty, respect, mutual consideration are musts
- Racial/cultural guides, mentors and “extended family” are musts

What should be the response, from “Karens”?



The story of “Central Park Karen” shows implicit bias that most Americans have been ingrained with.

- Here was her response, “I’m not racist. I did not mean to harm that man in any way. I sincerely and humbly apologize to everyone, especially to that man, his family,” she said. “It was unacceptable and I humbly and fully apologize to everyone who’s seen that video, everyone that’s been offended...everyone who thinks of me in a lower light and I understand why they do.”

- Instead, maybe something like this would have been more meaningful:
 - “I have realized through my actions that I have some deep-seated beliefs along the lines of race that I wasn’t even consciously aware of. I clearly have some work to do and am committed to doing better and to be an ally for people of color”

Karen

MASSIVE missing piece

Love
Is
Not
Enough

- We MUST listen to adult transracial adoptee's to understand what we are missing!
- We are fortunate to have *many* opportunities...

ADOPTED
CHILDREN
GROW UP.
WE'RE HERE.
ADULT ADOPTEE
VOICES
ARE IMPORTANT.

Child welfare professionals should...



- Join a few Facebook groups on transracial adoption

AND

- Just listen and read.
 - You will feel the pain
 - You will feel the missing links
 - You will reassess what you've come to believe
 - You will see we have to do better by listening to TRA's (Transracial Adoptee's)
 - One Facebook group is called "Transracial Adoption"

TRA (Transracial Adoptee) Quote



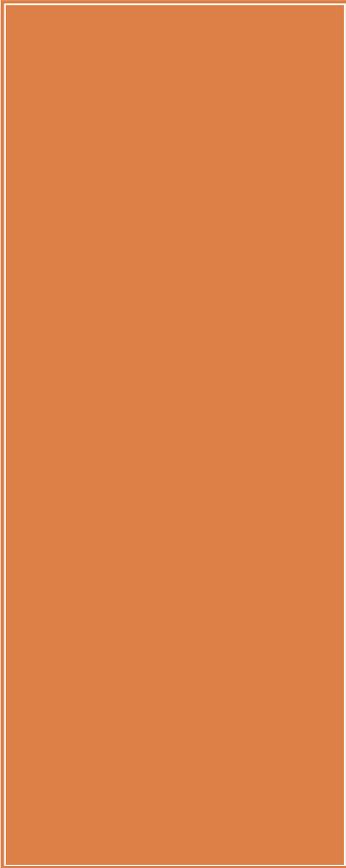
- “Would love agencies to have parents assessed using the TAPS and WRIAS. Then tailor trainings about racial identity, identity development, privilege, multicultural education, cultural acculturation and so much more based on the individual assessments. I’d also like for them to be required to have several immersion experiences so they can relate to the experience of otherness.”
 - TAPS: Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale
 - WRIAS: White Racial Identity Attitude Scale

What do you wish you had been prepared for?



- “How to navigate systems that oppress and racially profile my black son. How to recognize the subtle signs of racism omnipresent in the education system, medical system, etc. How to be my son's fiercest advocate and at the same time teach him to advocate for himself. How to deal with white systems that fail to recognize their complicity in upholding systems that benefit white people.”
- “Micro-aggressions daily. Persistent racist attitudes of family who had no clue they were hurting my children.”

What advice do you have for others?

- 
- “Don't do it unless you are willing to breathe in multiracial relationships [so] that you can be in the homes of the other culture. Spend time in black churches. Put yourself in settings where you are the only white person there. Hold the training classes in the community from where the children come. Learn about cross-racial families where not all the parents are white.”



Being Anti Racist

It starts with *you*



Be unafraid to look deeply into the beliefs that were taught to you, explicitly and implicitly. And challenge them.

Fear not the truth...



~~COLORBLIND~~

An approach that diminishes trust and attachment

Color blind is *not* a good thing



Teaches kids...

- Race is taboo and should not be noticed
- Ignore racial differences and inequities
- Implicit biases are acceptable
- Interpret cues alone from the world around them
- *“Do my parents even see ME?”*

“I Don’t See Race”

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qArvBdHkJA>

“Colorblind is not ok. Parents need to be deeply engaged in their own anti-racist work before kids are placed transracially.” WAP

Attachment and Race – We Know Better Now



- Attachment is considered outside of any racial considerations and most interventions lack racial and cultural components.
 - When transracial adoptees feel their adoptive parents don't have their back regarding racial and ethnic discrimination, it will only complicate their trust and attachment building to their adoptive parents.
- “Shared fate” theory is based on David Kirk’s experience working with adoptive families. It challenged the “matching” approach in adoption practice (placing a child into a family where the child looked as if he or she could have been biologically born to the adoptive parents).
 - Parents who rejected the differences between themselves and their adopted child struggled more in their relationship with their adopted child than the parents that accepted those differences. According to Kirk, the families who accepted difference were able to recognize their child’s history and saw their family as having a shared future, or shared fate.
- Assimilation and rejection of difference comes at a cost, the cost of the adoptee’s identity development and often, cost of the parent child relationship when the child becomes an adult and finds others who provide validation of their racial and ethnic identity.

They're not too young to talk about race!



0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
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At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al, 2008)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

Do some learning of your own to get ready for conversations with children.

Here are some good places to seek *information* and *training*:

- Teaching Tolerance — tolerance.org
- Raising Race Conscious Children — raceconscious.org
- Embrace Race — embracerace.org
- Teaching for Change — teachingforchange.org
- AORTA Cooperative — aorta.coop
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — dvaeyc.org



JaeRan Kim and Transracial Adoption Justice



1. Intersectional thinking - to understand that as transracial adoptees, our lives are impacted by both race and adoption, not just one or the other
2. Being believed when we experience discrimination and oppression based on our racial, ethnic and/or adoption identities
3. Having the white people in our lives do their own work to understand the history of race, power, privilege and oppression in our country – including what it means in both a broad and personal context to be white
4. Having people in our lives who care about our communities, not just us as individuals
5. Considering the long haul - that the focus on us as children is limiting and can be damaging - if adoption is truly a lifelong journey, then we need people who spend the first two decades thinking about and preparing for the next fifty-plus years of our lives

Growth Mindset



- Based in humility – knowing that mistakes will be made
- What learn from our mistakes helps us achieve
- Being so afraid to make mistakes that we stand firm in defensive mode is like having our feet stuck in cement. We can defend where we are but doing so will never help us get to where we want to be.
 - A fixed mindset says, “I’m right and I’m not going to change my mind.” A growth mindset says, “What does the other person know that I don’t? What could I learn from this that would make me do better next time?”
- Maya Angelou, “I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”

Being an Active Anti-Racist



“Bias interrupters” and interrupters of white supremacy:

- Understand that having friends and family that are part of a marginalized community does not alone make me an ally.
- Seek to understand the experiences of others and what they need, not what I think they need
- Find support from others doing anti-racist work. For white people, that means finding a group of people who will lovingly call you in and be a truthful mirror and window.
 - Mirrors help you see what you are; and windows show you what’s possible. We live in a call-out world where we are shamed for our mistakes. Find those people who will gently call you in and support your growth mindset.
- Actively interrupt offensive jokes and comments.
 - Ask, “I’m not sure I understand what you’re saying. Could you explain what you mean?”
 - Find ways to challenge people with kindness.
- Leverage the power and privilege you have to bring about social change that benefits marginalized communities, especially if they involve not just children in those communities but all of its members.

Transracialization – John Raible



“Instead of lifting children out (of poverty, dysfunctional families, or dire circumstances), parents can lift themselves into communities of color to embrace their rich cultures, heritages, and ongoing traditions of anti-racist struggle..... Transracialization levels the playing field offers learning opportunities that individuals from the dominate culture just can't get living safely ensconced in a comfortable monocultural community some of us know as 'Whitesville'.”

<https://johnraible.wordpress.com/about-john-w-raible/what-is-transracialization/>

The Message is CLEAR



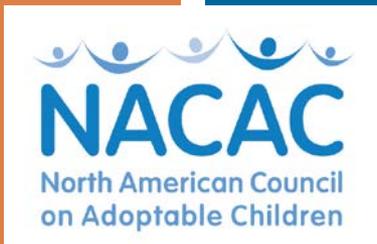
- We are not properly preparing our transracial families
- We need to help families dig deeper into issues of race/racism
- We **HAVE** to listen to transracially adopted adults, adolescents and children
- We **HAVE** to do better

Black Lives Matter

Let's Agree to Do Better

NACAC can help

- We can provide customized training for child welfare professionals and families on any related adoptive, foster or kinship topic.
- We have staff with experience as well as access to a network of trainers from around the country.





Questions & Comments?



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Thank you for attending!



NEXT SESSION

Building Adoption Competency and Strengthening Racial Equity
Within the Adoption Workforce

August 6, 2020

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