

## Growing Up Different: Understanding our Families

Foster Care and Adoption and Its Impact on Learning, Identity, and Self-Image in Multiracial Families



## Important Terms to Know Regarding Race

**Race-** refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant

**Ethnicity-**refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs.

**Culture-**is the 'way of life' of groups of people, meaning the way they do things.



**Heritage-** the background from which one comes



## Racial Identity

**Definition:** can be referred to as a sense of group or collective **identity** based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular **racial** group.

- Lifelong, continuously changing process
- Influenced by those in a particular individual's ethnic group as well as those outside it



## Racial Identity Constructs



- Genetic Racial Identity
- Imposed Racial Identity
- Cognitive Racial Identity
- Feeling Racial Identity
- Visual Racial Identity



## Influences on Racial Identity Development

- Age of child
- Cognitive development
- Racial environment
- Racial socialization experiences



## Development of racial and cultural identity

- 3 years—Aware of race and skin color differences
- 4-6—can identify own group and may put positive or negative value; information from environment and parents
- 7-11—have idea of own and other racial and ethnic groups; explore meaning of being member of different groups-calculates social mathematics of belonging to particular group
- 12-18—assess importance of race and ethnicity



## Elementary School

- School age children want to be like everyone else—they may start to pull away from heritage activities—Child won't say "I wish I were White, but might say, let's skip culture day—I'd rather play soccer."
- Emerging Awareness: Children who attend racially diverse schools or reside in racially diverse communities are much more likely to become aware of race at an early age than those in more homogeneous settings.



## Preteens



### Social Development

- Preteens hate to feel different
- Role models are key to forming identity
- Mentor of their own race can be very influential

### Identity Development

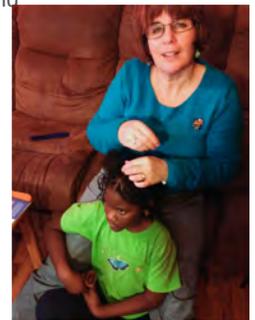
- Explore the question of identity, "Who Am I?"
- Experience varying reactions of others as they mature

## Issues for parents and children

Issue	Intervention
Absence of an adult of color in the family	Shared parenting with adults of color
Need for race conscious parents	Education, attention, be an ally
Awareness of adoption issues of rejection and abandonment	Validation not denial, anticipate and hold feelings for child
Impact of visibility	Awareness, preparation, practice
Hair and Skin care	Ask, partner, learn
Systemic racism/assumptions	Speak out, advocate, "arm" child

## Hair

- Hair is a huge part of identity. Learning how to take care of Children's hair and community resources is essential to healthy identity



## Common Misconceptions of Positive Racial Attitudes

- Color Blindness:
  - "I don't see color" "We are all part of the human race. We are all the same race." "I don't see you as a person of color"
- Transcendence
  - "What matters is what is on the inside, not on the outside"



## White Privilege

- 1. a. A right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities.
- 2. A privileged position; the possession of an advantage white persons enjoy over non-white persons.
- To sum up, (1) white privilege should be defined carefully because it is contested; (2) that contestation is itself racialized, (3) which is what we should expect, since (4) socially invisible structures of oppression are more effective and enduring than socially visible ones.

White privilege doesn't mean your life hasn't been hard. It means that your skin color isn't one of the things making it harder.

## Educational Inequalities



- 2005: 48% of 4th grade black students attended high-poverty schools, compared with 5% of 4th grade white students.
- The percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who were high school dropouts was higher among black students (10%) than among whites (6%) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (3%).
- 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment, higher percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander and white students in grades 4th, 8th, and 12th scored at or above proficient than black students at the same grade level.
- In 2006, 18.5% of blacks aged 25 years and older earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 31% of whites.



## Issues for parents and children

- Absence of an adult of color in the family
- Need for race conscious parents
- Awareness of adoption issues of rejection and abandonment
- Impact of visibility
- Hair and Skin care
- Child learns racially based survival skills
- Acknowledge differences and similarities within your family



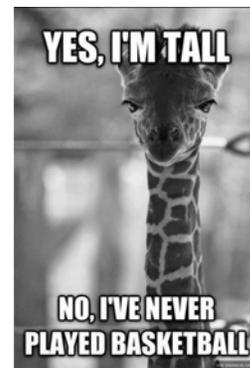
## Things White Parents can do to be better informed

- Understand and check personal bias
- Understand white privilege and how privilege can be used to be an ally and advocate for children
- Understand cultural humility and be aware
- Be open, celebrate culture and be open to trying and embracing new cultural traditions



## Understanding Personal Bias

- Bias: Attitudes, opinions, and judgments we hold about a person or group of people before the presence of evidence that either confirms or contradicts. Bias can be positive or negative.

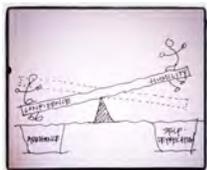


Tall People Will Understand



## Competence vs. Humility

- Cultural Competence Vs. Cultural Humility
  - Competence implies an endpoint
  - Humility implies ongoing learning



*“To be culturally humble means that I am willing to learn,”*  
- Joe Gallagher



## Don't Be Afraid To Talk about Race

OUR SIMILARITIES BRING US TO A COMMON GROUND. OUR DIFFERENCES ALLOW US TO BE FASCINATED BY EACH OTHER. TOM HOBBS

“Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another.” - Desmond Tutu

Christians Tired of Being Misrepresented facebook.com/christiansnotrepresented jack



## What White Parents Should Know About Adopting Black Children

- The desire to love a black child must be matched by the willingness to learn and accept the unique needs of blackness and black childhood.
  - "Going in with the mindset that this black child is no different from any other child is a naiveté the adoptive parent cannot afford..."
- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/la-sha/what-white-parents-adopting-black-children\\_b\\_8951402.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/la-sha/what-white-parents-adopting-black-children_b_8951402.html)



## Comments from Transracial Adoptive Parents about Challenges faced due to racial differences



- Teased and asked questions by peers—upsets child
- She would like me to be brown also
- Kids make fun of her
- Hair and skin care
- People asking if AP is the real mom
- KKK pamphlet dropped on friend's door
- Remarks at school—"can't play here—only for White kids"



## Intent Vs. Impact

WARNING DANGER: **Microaggressions**-behavioral, and environmental communications, whether intentional or unintentional, that transmit hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to a target person because they belong to a stigmatized group.



### Real Examples:

- "So where are you from?.... No, like where are you really from?"
- "Your Hair is so fluffy its like dogs"
- "So where are your real parents?"
- "What was the orphanage like?"



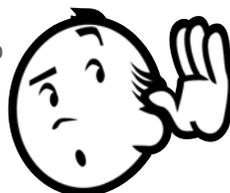
## Having "The Talk": Racism and Racialized Violence

Help your children to stay safe! Have the "talk"



## LISTEN

- If your child is sharing that something makes them uncomfortable; listen!
- Golden Rule:** Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
- Platinum Rule:** Do unto others as they would have you do unto them



## Being an Ally

- "You aren't an ally just because you love a member of the community—you are an ally because you actively fight against racial injustice." – Jaeran Kim, PhD

**"You don't have to become an expert on equity to become an ally."**

Ally is not a noun.  
**It's a verb.**



## Imperatives...

- Have books, periodicals, toys, games, artwork that reflect your child's heritage.
- Participate in cultural activities in your community.
- Be clear with yourself and your child as to her/his racial identity.
- Be active in social change.
- Be intolerant of racism.



## Imperatives...

- Ask for help, and keep learning!
- Accept and understand that not all of her/his activities will--or ought to--include you.
- Always know whose side you're on.
- Learn how to choose your battles. You can't do everything.
- Embrace and celebrate diversity across the board.



## Adult Responsibilities

- Have friends, adults as well as children, that reflect your child's heritage.
- Realize that in matters of race and culture you will learn the most about parenting your child from other cultural guides.
- Attend integrated schools.
- Live in an integrated community.
- Use services in your child's cultural community.
- Learn how to take good care of your child's skin and hair, dietary preferences.



## Your Family Needs No Explanation

Model to your children they are not required to explain why their family looks different to everyone they meet. Each person's story is *their* story to tell when and to whom *they* decide to share it with.

Don't hand out your child's adoption story like a grandma hands out cookies. Your child should decide who, what, when, where, why, & how the story is shared.



#AdoptionWisdom  
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## Parenting Doesn't Stop at 18

- Most young people experience a great mix of struggle for independence and fear if the unknown, Transracial adoptees have an added layer of trying to figure out where they fit in culturally independent of their families

Me calling my mom to ask her how much medicine she think I should take even though it's written on the bottle.



Being a good parent requires knowing when to push & when to back off when to help & when to let them make mistakes & then being strong enough to watch them go.

## Now What?

You are under no obligation to be the same person you were a year, a month, or even 15 minutes ago. You have the right to grow. No apologies.



## Contact Information



Mercedes Zahler,  
Youth Engagement  
Coordinator  
651-644-3036, ext. 112  
[mercedeszahler@nacac.org](mailto:mercedeszahler@nacac.org)

Kim Stevens,  
Program Manager  
508-254-2200  
[kimstevens@nacac.org](mailto:kimstevens@nacac.org)

