pact's point of view
serving adopted children of color

Perspectives on Transracial Adoption

Adoption is a response to a life crisis.
It is a turning point, separating everything that comes before from what happens after. A decision that forces us to confront the most basic goals of life, it fosters change and growth for all who are touched by it.

Race matters.
When parents are raising a child of a race different from their own, the parents' lack of experience living in the race and skin of the child's birth heritage creates challenges for all members of the family.

Transracial adoption issues are not easy or comfortable subjects to discuss.
Support from well-meaning friends and family is often not enough. Pact exists to serve the special needs of adoptive parents of children of color by providing tools to explore the issues and consider suggestions toward resolution. Breaking through the isolation and discovering how others handle similar situations can be a great relief.

First Person Experiences

"I wanted their hair. Dudes at school hid spit balls in my Afro mop and laughed."
— David French

"Only black folk I knew as a kid were in TV sit-coms."
— Roxie Agur

"When my family went for a drive, we'd lock the doors when we drove through black neighborhoods."
— Jenn Salter-Pierce

"Family, friends... sometimes even I didn't see what was coming down. So when a white person says to me, 'it doesn't matter if they're black, white, brown or green...' or 'there's only one race, the human race,' a shudder goes down my spine. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, Marcus Garvey...don't matter. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, Brown v. Board of Education, the March on Washington...don't matter. The Jubilee Singers, the Harlem Renaissance, Motown... don't matter. Black people were not enslaved, did not resist, escape, campaign and lose our lives because we were 'green.' Yet these are the arguments that many 'lay' people use to justify transracial adoption. Those two sentences erase a history of oppression and survival against enormous odds, as well as a legacy of courageous resistance and struggle. They also set us up to fail. As we grow into our teens, adopted children discover that being 'human' is simply not enough."
— Julia Sudbury-Oparah

"As I was growing up, countless classmates told me, 'You don't act Black.' I am sick to think now that I took it as a compliment. My parents told me I was Ethiopian, Mexican, black and white. They saw racial divisions as dangerous. If we ignored race, they hoped, we might all live happily as one. But when I was a child, my life wasn't 'colorless.' it was white. And colorblindness is a luxury young black children can't afford. Love does not prepare an African American child for the society we live in. And love does not replace the importance of knowing your own ethnicity and culture. Today, I say I am African American."
— Rachel Nordlinger

"In my dreams, I saw myself as being white."
—Chinese woman

"I have no boyfriends and no boy is interested in me. A lot of my girlfriends are pretty average-looking, and they all have boyfriends. They say, 'You are so beautiful. You're so pretty.' And I think to myself, then why don't any of the boys like me? I know the answer is race. But we never talk about it. It is never acknowledged. At the end of the 9th grade I started hanging out in the Mexican section of town even though my parents went ballistic. I tried to learn what Chicano people do. I didn't really know how to dance and I don't speak Spanish. Some of them thought I was stuck-up because of that and because I'm shy."
— Sophia Greenberg

"The census form came today. I saw the dreaded instructions, the stern admonishment to check only one box. White. Japanese. Other. There is the blank space to fill in, a half inch in which to claim identity. I am Other. Hambun-Hambun, or half and half. Happa. Biologically, genetically, I'm fifty percent Japanese and fifty percent... unknown. Adopted as an infant into a Japanese American family, I have always had a heightened awareness of my 'otherness.'"
—Susan Ito

pact's point of view
serving adopted children of color

A Transracially-Adopted Child's Bill of Rights

by Liza Steinberg

adapted from "A Bill of Rights for Mixed Folks," by Marilyn Dramé.

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