First published in Pact's Point of View © 2007

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Teen Corner

TRA (Transracial Adoptee) **Understanding and Love** by Sara Blair

Adoption is a funny thing. It carries with it love, appreciation, gain, struggle, pain and loss. My adoption has been filled to the brim with love and appreciation and these have given me the strength to deal with and move past the latter. I can honestly say that I do not regret being a TRA; it is one of the things that makes me who I am. I am proud to be unique and to have my own special story. While being unique and being part of a unique family is amazing, the fact that my family accepts my phenotypic differences does not push the fact that I am a woman of color to the background, it is always the first thing others see.

For many, seeing a child of color with a white family leads to common questions that all mixed-race families encounter. These questions range from things as basic as "Is that really your sister?" to "How much did it cost to adopt your child?" These questions, have always been part of my life. I thought they would stop once I got to high school or college but they have continued to follow me as I encounter ignorant people of all ages and walks of life. I now understand that the questions will forever manifest themselves in one way another. I try to not let them get me down, and instead I fight to have them make me stronger and more proud of who I am as a TRA and a woman of color.

This poem was written to be spoken aloud. It is the product of three weeks that pushed me to think deeply about why I felt mad at my family at times and why I felt mad at myself. These three weeks also pushed me to reflect on a year and a half of deep depression and the reasons that I find myself getting angry at the world. What came out was my realization that no matter how hard I try I will never be exactly the same as my family. Though I like being different, part of me wants to be able to go through life without people trailing me in stores, without being subjected to racial slurs and discrimination. A part of me wants to be like my mom and sister who only have to deal with the discrimination because they are women while I have to go through life asking myself if someone discriminated against me because I am a woman or if I am of color.

When I was younger, I went to a county fair in Maryland with my grandparents. My grandfather decided he wanted to buy a belt. The guy who owned the belt stand had a huge confederate flag hanging behind his booth, and an extensive collection of confederate objects on display for sale. Though I was with my grandparents, both of whom are white, the man and his assistant looked at me with pure malice in their eyes. The assistant went so far as to flash a leering smile at me and look me up and down as if to say that if he caught me walking down the street by myself he could do whatever he wanted to me. It was one of the most terrifying experiences that I have had as a woman of color. All the while, my grandparents never realized there was even a possibility I may be subject to a situation like that.

What makes these moments really hard is the fact that it is so difficult and almost impossible to describe my feelings to those who will never feel them so they will ever understand. It was much easier for me to call my friend, who is also of color, and cry to her over the phone than it was to try and describe the feelings to my own sister after the event took place. I realized my anger was not directly influenced from my family but more so by the frustration of not being able to help them understand my feelings of being discriminated against and thus not really having the support I needed as a kid of color when I was younger leaving me to deal with those feelings on my own.

I want to be able to talk to my parents about what I am going through and I want to do my best to help them understand. Yet, I know that as long as society is the way it is, it will be very difficult for them ever to feel what I feel. Though that realization is daunting, I also know that I am not helping change anything if I stop trying to help them understand even the littlest thing. And though it may be cliché: there is hope for understanding - we just need to believe it can happen.

2 mothers,
2 fathers, 1 sister,
1 brother
Inside me burns a fiery
hunger
A loss of never meeting
No birthday or holiday
greetings
From biological family

While my friends are smiling Sadness harbors itself in my soul I am falling into a black and white hole No bottom or end in sight Nightmares end in fright

Those around me that know my name
Don't realize there is more to my life
Struggle, pain, and endless strife
Underneath a rich, white light
Covers me in a warm glow every night

My adoptive parents find it hard to understand Race relations
Judgment and discrimination
Drive this nation
Somehow not touching the lives of my parents
But for me, in my life, it is inherent.