pact's point of view
The newsletter for adoptive families with children of color

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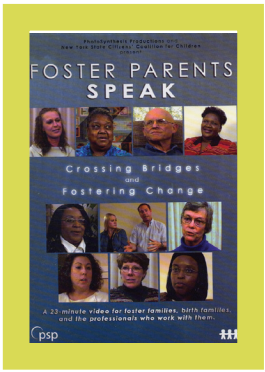
Film Review



Foster Parents Speak

Crossing Bridges and Fostering Change

By Photosynthesis Productions (www.photosythesisproductions.com)
New York State Citizen's Coalition for Children (www.nysccc.org)

Gerald P. Mallon, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, says of Foster Parents Speak:

At last, an honest and moving film that captures the essence of what it means to be a foster parent in America… This is a film that all child welfare professionals and parents should watch.

We agree! This 23-minute film, created by the producers of another favorite, Struggle for Identity, delivers its cutting-edge message in a powerful manner. Short enough to be used as a training film, meaty enough to provoke intense discussion and new ways of thinking about foster care, this film should be shown at every foster-parent orientation and can help every child welfare professional focus on how they craft their practice. Foster Parents Speak brings to life the phrase "in the child's best interest." The inspiring foster parents it profiles place children's needs first as they create safe environments for children who are faced with family instability while their permanency plan is still in process.

One small caveat: while we applaud the inclusion of many foster parents of color, unfortunately the most prominent speakers in the film are mainly white. However, the speakers are very articulate and speak from the heart. Our desire to see more balanced representation does not detract from the great value of the video overall.

"When you take a child into your home, you're also taking in that family."

Much of the dialogue focuses on how to make connections with birth family for the sake of the child. The love and commitment of the foster parents is evident as they speak about how and why this matters for the child. Their commitment to valuing the fullness of who the child is, including the legacy and heritage of the birth family, is moving and inspirational. These courageous foster parents clearly believe that the most important thing they can do for their foster children is take the risk of validating the connection that exists between birth parent and child, without judgment.

"… You have to put yourselves in their shoes. No matter what happened you always want to go home. So you have to get yourself out of the way and do whatever it takes to make it happen for the child…"

Seeing the generous role that foster parents play can teach all of us a lesson about how we can serve children by honoring birth family connections rather than challenging them or trying to stop them from playing a role in a child's life. These are families who have taken in children whose parents have hurt them badly, yet still they find a way to be open, translating their beliefs into actions.

"For the kids that are going on to be adopted the need to know that where they came from was okay, that their birth parents loved them."

These parents show us that love trumps fear, love breeds trust, love creates bridges rather than tearing them down, and most importantly, love recognizes the humanity in every adult and child. Bravo.

"We can't change the world…But we do our best, one life at a time…."