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

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Non-Adopted Siblings of Adoptees

by Beth Hall

Pact Director Beth Hall, a non-adopted sibling herself, had dinner with seven non-adopted siblings who attended Pact Family Camp with their families. The group included children from ages seven to fourteen, as well as two other adults, all of whom grew up in families where some of the children were born to their parents and others were adopted by their parents. Some highlights of the discussion:

#1 Hated Question: "Is that your real sister/brother?"

"What I hate is when they don't believe me that she really is my sister."

"Is there such a thing as a 'fake' brother?"

"As if they get to decide who is our brother or sister!"

"Sometimes I just say, yeah why not?"

"I hate that I have to point out my sister to my friends, and even when I do they just don't know that she is my sister so then I have to explain and I really HATE that."

"I use WISE Up where you can ignore people's question or tell them stuff if you want to but only if you trust them because some people just don't get it and they say stupid stuff."

"I've even had people follow me around and keep asking me questions even when I am trying to walk away – it's annoying."

How do you explain adoption to other people?

"It is complicated to explain, I just say that with adoption you get a brother or sister."

"People think you sign a paper and then like you 'win' a sibling."

What kinds of things happen at home?

"People stare and I hate it. They just can't figure out why we are together."

"People who don't have adoption in their family think everyone should look alike."

"At school I tell the kids about my brother and then some of them go ask him like they don't believe me and that makes me really mad. Do they think I would make this stuff up?"

How did you feel or respond when you parents adopted your brother or sister?

"At first I got pissed and I even said '[my sibling] is too black.' Now I am ashamed of that, I would never say that now. I guess I was scared. I wasn't sure how my friends would react."

What is the Pact Camp experience like for you?

"It's the opposite here, white is the minority. At home it is different because white is in the majority."

"Most of my sister's friends are African American and a few Korean. Sometimes she likes to be with other African Americans."

"I have a lot of black friends – because I trust them."

"At home, there are only two African Americans in my class."

"One thing I like about Camp is that no one asks those questions."

"Yeah I would be so mad if someone at Camp asked, I would want a refund!!"

"Sometimes I feel left out because I have no clue what it feels like to be adopted."

"It's hard to feel different sometimes but I don't mind because I know that she feels that way at home sometimes. Plus I like it here."