

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope
Aspiranet and Tulare County Adoption Support Program



Greetings REACH families!

Can you believe the holidays are just around the corner? As we approach the busy season, our thoughts move towards rituals, customs and the culture within our families. This quarter's Newsletter focuses on the importance of culture in the lives of our adopted children. We examine the multiple losses that are accrued by this population, as well as the significance of maintaining family/cultural connections, examining the formation of one's cultural identity, and all of the intricacies that come along with multi-cultural adoptions. We do this by examining the 2013 movie "Closure", which uniquely explores the perspective of an African American woman being raised by a Caucasian couple in Washington. Additional articles address some of the most significant issues individuals in the adoption constellation are facing when dealing with culture in their families, and helps educate us on the importance of this topic. I hope everyone enjoys this holiday season and I truly look forward to seeing you at our Support Groups and Events!!!



Best!
JulieAnn

TULARE COUNTY Fall 2017

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NEED HELP

Is your adoptive child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility
- Substance use disorder
- Fire starter
- Minor criminal behavior
- School behavior/truancy problems
- Beyond control of parents and or primary care adults
- Mild Developmental disorder not recognized by a Regional Center

If so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive families to services that can help. Some of the services available to your family include Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) and Tulare County Wraparound. TBS is an intensive one-to-one behavioral mental health service. The service is available to parents/caregivers of children/youth who experience serious emotional challenges. Tulare County Wraparound provides high-risk youth and their families an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at-risk youth and families into community support systems.

Transracial Adoptions and Cultural Identity

By Ana Pano, MSW

“When a white person says to me, ‘It doesn’t matter if they’re black, white, brown or green...’ there’s only one race, the human race,’ a shudder goes down my spine. Those 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, transracially-adopted children discover that being human is simply not enough.” -Julia Sudbury-Oparah

In the United States, thousands of children and youth are adopted from the child welfare system. Many of these adoptions will be transracial; when a child is placed with a family whose ethnicity or race is different than that of the child. According to the California’s Children’s Bureau data for 2015, children who were adopted from the foster care system consisted of: 48% White, 22% Latino, and 18% Black or African American.

In transracial/transcultural adoption, families may have physical traits, customs or traditions that are visibly different from that of the child/youth. An adoptive family may feel the need to overlook the child’s ethnic or racial background as a form of unconditional love, in order to make that child feel no different from them. This “color blind” approach many interfere with a child’s cultural identity and self identity being fully expressed and developed. Topics of white privilege, racism, discrimination, and institutional racism are life experiences that their adopted child or family may face throughout their lifetime. A child who does not develop a healthy sense of self may experience inner feelings of confusion, depression, and low self esteem. It is vital for that family to support their child’s needs when it comes to self and family identity. In *Birthmarks*, Patton states “transracial and transcultural adoptees are ‘multicultural,’ in that they draw on a repertoire of cultural meaning systems in charting their course through life (p 13.)”. Families of transracial adoption must know that their family is multifaceted and both include and honor their child’s roots, identity, and history.

In the article, “*Racially Conscientious, Parenting in a Colorblind Society*”, Keleher suggests for parents of transracial adoptions to have real conversations about racism with their child. Children must be informed of the reality of discrimination that can impact them individually and as a family. Families must be prepared to navigate these real life experiences and teach their child different ways they can respond effectively to acts of racism and discrimination. This allows for a child to feel a sense of control towards racism and discrimination. *Adopt Us Kids*, also suggests



the importance of seeking out mentors for a child who is racially/ ethnically different from their family. A child may have questions relating to race and culture that the adoptive parent may not understand. By seeking out community members, family friends, and cultural brokers knowledgeable around the child’s questions, a child can ask questions regarding their identity, culture, race, and traditions. Modeling to value diversity is a beautiful gift a family can teach their child.

Though transracial adoption can have its challenges and complexities, many of these issues can be addressed by the adoptive family seeking different approaches that are supportive and empowering. When an adoptive family is prepared or educated in ways to approach unique challenges, they can effectively discuss and address uncomfortable situations when they arise. Additionally, this can empower a family to seek culturally aware resources, such as support groups, artistic outlets and other community resources that can help with issues of discrimination and self identity.

It is important that a family of transracial/transcultural adoption seek support when they feel it is needed. Aspiranet’s REACH Post-Adoption Services has several resources that are helpful in meeting a family’s needs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC:

Children’s Bureau AFCARS Report. (June, 30, 2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-report-23>

Keleher, Terry. *Racially Conscientious. Parenting in a Colorblind Society*. Pact’s Point of View. Retrieved from: <https://www.pactadopt.org/app/servlet/documentapp.DisplayDocument?DocID=463>

Patton, S. (2000). *Birthmarks: Transracial Adoption in Contemporary America*. New York, New York. New York University Publication. “Seven Suggestions for a Successful Transracial Adoption”. AdoptUSkids. No date. Retrieved from: <https://www.adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/how-to-adopt-and-foster/envisioning-your-family/transracial-adoption>

Identity Development and Transracial Adoption

By Gabriela Martinez, LMFT

**Adapted from "Seven Suggestions for a Successful Transracial Adoption" –www.adoptuskids.org*

Our personal identity gives each of us an integrated and cohesive sense of self that endures throughout our lives. Our sense of personal identity is shaped by our experiences and interactions with others, and it is this identity that helps guide our actions, beliefs, and behaviors as we age. In adolescence, the primary task for a person is to establish a secure sense of identity. An adolescent must struggle to discover and find his or her own identity, while negotiating and struggling with social interactions and "fitting in", and developing a sense of morality. During adolescence, children explore their independence and develop a sense of self. Those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and feelings of independence and control. Those who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will feel insecure and confused about themselves and the future. All adolescence experience this "crisis" in identity formation, but it is likely that adopted teenagers will face additional complications. When an adolescent is from a different ethnic group and culture than his or her adoptive family, they may face additional challenges. Due to their internal identity struggles, they may appear angrier and be more critical of their adoptive parents. They may withdraw more or have an urge to go away to find their "true identity". Adolescents often express their reactions to loss by rebelling against parental standards. For transracially adopted teenagers, knowing that they have a different origin contributes to their need to define themselves independently. Race and culture matter and can be especially important for children who have experienced loss. Losing connections to their culture and racial heritage, or being raised in households where their importance is not acknowledged can affect children throughout their lives. Learning about and respecting a child's culture and finding ways to maintain their connections to it are critical components to helping an adopted child thrive.

Below are some tips to help your teenager with cultural identity issues:

Find mentors and role models for your child

Because you are their parent, your child will turn to you for guidance in many areas. But there may be questions related to

their race and culture that you cannot answer and problems you simply cannot understand. Involving adults in your child's life who share their culture will give them valuable role models and allies. Also, surround your child with positive images and stories of people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including their own.

Make new connections in your community

Adopting a child of a different race or culture is an opportunity to explore new resources and get involved with organizations in your community.

- Enroll your child in a diverse school.
- Join community groups dedicated to racial or social justice.
- Participate in a faith community that reflects your adopted child's heritage.
- Seek out cultural events, like Cinco de Mayo if your child is Latino, but be sure that your involvement does not end with attending an annual celebration.

Keep children talking

Find opportunities to bring up topics of race and culture in everyday life. Do not wait for your child to introduce the topic. The news, popular media, music, art, and books all offer platforms for discussing race, culture, assumptions, and diversity. Encouraging honest conversations will help create an environment where your child feels safe to explore their heritage.

Acknowledge racism

Part of adopting a child of another background can be helping them cope with and respond to racism. As a parent of a different race or culture from your child, you may have to educate yourself before you can help your child navigate the complicated racial landscape of our country.

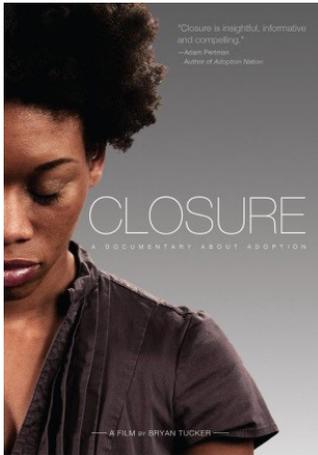
Embrace new traditions

In addition to celebrating your child's traditions and the traditions of their heritage, celebrate those of other cultures. Your child will learn to value and respect diversity and see that you value the positive contributions that people of all cultures make to society.

**You can find additional resources on transracial and transcultural families on the Child Welfare Information Gateway <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/foster/transracial/>*

A movie review of the documentary, “Closure”

By Toni Brown, M.S.



“Closure” is a striking documentary about adoption that touches upon some very powerful topics. These topics include search and reunion with birth family, talking about race, transracial adoption, the harmful role that secrecy can play in adoption, closed versus open adoption, and many more. The documentary is about an African American woman named

Angela Tucker who was raised by Caucasian parents in a large multiracial family in Washington State. Angela was adopted by her parents, as an infant, from the foster care system in the state of Tennessee. The adoption was a closed adoption. The film shows pictures and video of Angela’s childhood as she grows up in a loving and caring family with various siblings of different races and backgrounds. Angela eventually meets her future husband, Bryan Tucker, while attending college. As Angela graduates college, gets married, and joins the workforce as an Adoption Social Worker, she begins to have more and more of an interest in finding her birth family and answering questions that she has about her birth story. Questions such as who are my birth mother and my birth father? Why did they choose to make a plan for adoption? What would it have been like to be raised in a family that was African American? Where are my biological siblings? What would it be like to meet someone that has the same genetics as me and looks like me? These are very common questions a lot of adoptees face and wish to find the answers. Angela’s husband, Bryan, films and edits this documentary and follows Angela for two years during

the search for her birth family. The film does an incredible job of documenting the thoughts and emotions of all members of the adoption triad (adoptee, adoptive parent, birth parent) in addition to extended family members such as siblings, aunts, uncles, and other relatives that are connected through adoption. When Angela decided to tell her family that she was going to pursue finding her birth family, her parents and siblings had very common reactions of fear, rejection, questioning Angela’s loyalty, etc. But the family also understood why Angela had this yearning to find answers to her questions. They knew it was important to her and because of this, they decided to accompany her on her journey across the country to her place of birth in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It is here that Angela meets her birth mother for the first time, and meets family members who had never known she was even born – including her birth father. Angela’s birth family shows feelings of grief, loss, anger, joy, and gratitude. Several birth family members state they are grateful Angela was not only alive and well, but that she was raised in loving and caring family who were open to being vulnerable and “sharing” her with them.

Angela’s husband, Brian Tucker, writes a short message of what this film meant to him. “CLOSURE is my first film. The moment I met Angela’s family I knew that theirs was a story to be told. A couple that adopts seven children with special needs is a story we should all know about. I did not have any knowledge about adoption prior to meeting Angela, but over time I became convinced that this story could educate and encourage others towards older-child adoption, yet also show the struggles within adoption at the same time. Transracial adoption is a hot topic in American society today. Is it best to pluck a child out of their culture and place them in a drastically different one? Maybe, maybe not - but the complexity lies within the fact that sometimes there isn’t another choice. Angela and I both believe that more unique adoption stories being shown will only help to further educate and lessen the stereotypes, myths and stigma surrounding adoption.”

Online Trainings

Meeting our children’s cultural, racial and ethnic needs is an ongoing process and requires continual learning and growth on our part as their parents. Here are some online training resources that can assist you in the journey:

“Being the Best Adoptive Parents We Can Be: Intersections of Race and Adoption” Webinar - October 19, 2017 Center for Adoption Support and Education <http://adoptionssupport.org/>

“Cultural Issues in Parenting” & “Culturally Competent Parenting”
Foster Parent College - <http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/>

For multiple online trainings regarding various topics of race, ethnicity and culture – browse through courses and webinars offered through Adoption Learning Partners - <http://www.adoptionlearningpartners.org/>

SUPPORT GROUPS & EVENTS

Upcoming Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

- 3** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Radiant Kids Building, Visalia
- 10** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Koinonia Christian Fellowship Church, Hanford
- 16** Attachment: Embracing the Journey & Learning the Dance
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Hanford

NOVEMBER

- 7** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Radiant Kids Building, Visalia
- 13** 7 Core Issues in Adoption
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Hanford
- 14** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Koinonia Christian Fellowship Church, Hanford

DECEMBER

- 1** Attachment: Embracing the Journey & Learning the Dance
9:00 am – 12:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Visalia
- 4** 7 Core Issues in Adoption
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Visalia
- 5** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Radiant Kids Building, Visalia
- 12** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Koinonia Christian Fellowship Church, Hanford

Tulare County Reach Adoption Support Group

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents as well as others touched by adoption. Training hours provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.** Infants are welcome to join parents/caregivers.

Where: Radiant Kids Building - 615 E. Center Avenue, Visalia, CA 93292

When: 1st Tuesday of the month from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

• **October 3rd** • **November 7th** • **December 5th**

Contact: JulieAnn Jones (559) 741-7358, ext. 4506 or jujones@aspiranet.org

Kings County Reach Adoption Support Group

This group is designed for adults thinking about adoption, parents awaiting adoptive placement and parents of adopted children. Training hours and childcare provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.**

Where: Koinonia Christian Fellowship Church
12536 Hanford Armona Road, Hanford, CA 93230

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

• **October 10th** • **November 14th** • **December 12th**

Contact: Toni Brown (559) 741-7358, ext. 4509 or tbrown@aspiranet.org

College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Care Education Program

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge in Visalia and Hanford. For a complete list of classes, Google the key words **COS Visalia Kinship**. Register for classes with Miriam Sallam at (559) 737-4842 or email miriams@cos.edu. Classes are available in English and in Spanish. REACH will be conducting the following trainings through the College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Care Education Program in the Fall of 2017.

Attachment: Embracing the Journey & Learning the Dance

Monday, October 16th
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Hanford

Attachment: Embracing the Journey & Learning the Dance

Friday, December 1st
9:00 am – 12:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Visalia

7 Core Issues in Adoption

Monday, November 13th
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Hanford

7 Core Issues in Adoption

Monday, December 4th
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
COS Room Pending, Visalia



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REACH and Tulare County Adoption Support Services

Resource: We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews and relevant adoption related information.

Education: Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the triad (adoptive parents, adoptees and birth family).

Advocacy: We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

Crisis Intervention/Case Management: Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed. Spanish translation services are provided.

Hope: We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.