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NJ•ARCH Features:

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- Speakers Bureau



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC.

www.cafsnj.org

ADOPTION AND THE SCHOOLS: DEAR TEACHER

It's that time of year again, where thoughts move from the beach vacation to where to purchase the "perfect" backpack, lunch bag and new fall clothes for your child who has outgrown last year's outfits.

You begin to think about your child's new teacher, their new classmates and who out of the class will become your child's "new best friend"...at least for this year.

As a parent, you debate in your head whether you should tell your child's teacher that he came to your family in a "non-traditional" way; he was adopted. Should you even bother to share that information, especially, if your child "looks like you"? Is it anyone's business but yours?

There are many thoughts about this question. Creating a family through love (or as some say "from heart") is not anything to be ashamed of. It's part of you and your child's history together.

There are many ways that families are formed and that exist; there are one-parent families, kinship families, grandparents who parent their grandchildren and alike.

When you marry someone, you are not their "blood relatives". We chose to marry someone we love and decide to commit sharing life experiences with. The same with adoption. You may not be blood relatives, but you have decided to commit the rest of your lives to each other. That is a wonderful thing.

Some studies have shown that children, especially during the ages of 5 -10, are in the process of "working out their adoption" story: understanding what it means to have birth parents, having adoptive parents and putting all the pieces together in their family history. Children tend to think about this during school hours. Teacher's may think that the child is "day dreaming" but in truth, they

may just be thinking about their past.

Telling you child's teacher could be a great sense of relief and joy for all concerned. Secrets are gone; education begins. As a parent, you can take the opportunity to begin educating and sensitizing your teacher and school personnel on potential adoption issues.

Here are some ideas to begin educating your child's teacher and classmates about adoption:

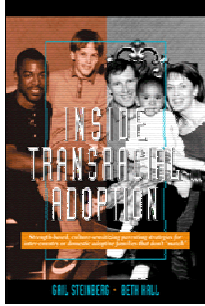
Read a book to the class:
Discuss the ways families

(Continued on page 7)

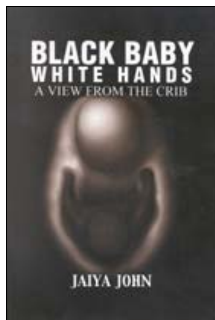


DID YOU KNOW?

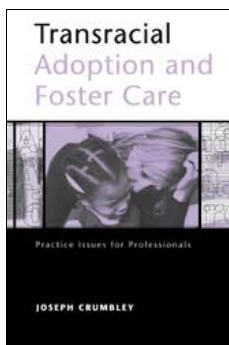
The NJ•ARCH Lending Library has a variety of books for transracial families.



Inside Transracial Adoption:
Strength-based, culture-sensitizing parenting strategies for inter-country or domestic adoptive families that don't "match"
By Gail Steinberg and Beth Hall



Black Baby White Hands:
A View From the Crib
By Jaiya John



Transracial Adoption and Foster Care:
Practice Issues for Professionals
By Joseph Crumbly

NATALIE'S BOOK CORNER: DR. JOSEPH CRUMBLY, DSW—WORKSHOP SERIES

Hello, Readers. Welcome to Natalie's Book Corner. I would like to introduce you to our collection of videotapes in this issue. To date, NJ•ARCH has accumulated a library of 69 videos for your viewing pleasure.

Dr. Joseph Crumbly, D.S.W., presented a series of four workshops at the 21st annual NACAC

Conference. The workshops explored issues in transracial adoption and were videotaped. I have decided to briefly discuss these with you now.

Tape 1 of 4: "*The Special Needs of Minority Children Adopted Transracially*" is approximately 52 minutes in length.

Prejudice, discrimination, inequities exist. Because of society, special needs exist. Racial identity is more important for a biracial child. If you are part of the dominant culture, you do not think about racial identity. Gender and race identity awareness are survival skills for minority children. Positive role models are essential. Risk factors, attachments from infancy through latency,

adult individuation are addressed. Love is important! Love is not enough! Parents must advocate for child. A child looks to parent



for support. This promotes bonding and attachment. Jokes that were acceptable are not anymore. The family unit must become a minority integrated family. They must set up surrogates as role models. Parents must be able to prepare their child for discrimination and prejudice. Parents must be able to deal with stares from people and obvious criticism of their choice to adopt across racial lines. Even in families, ties are sometimes severed over transracial adoption.

Tape 2 of 4: "*The Impact of Transracial Adoptions on the Adopted Child and Adoptive Family*" is approximately 54 minutes in length.

The sources of loss for the adopted child include his birth family and his birth

community. These issues impact on how the child feels about his adoptive family and, by extension, how he feels about his adoptive community.

Some minorities are more celebrated than others. Minority status becomes more heightened in cross racial adoption. Some children suffer from an inferiority complex related to adoption as

well as different race placement. Most minority children are bicultural.

There are the dichotomies of loyalty and disloyalty. Adopted children are very protective of their adoptive parents. There are culture adjustments to be made especially in older children. These include: foods, language, gestures, behaviors, dance.

The reality is that a biracial child is seen as a minority child. The issue of commitment versus neutrality comes into play here. It is easier to pass than to be considered a minority. This fosters feelings of avoidance, denial and guilt. The word "chameleon" applies here. None of this has anything to do with attachment

Examples are used to explain

(Continued from page 2)

and further explore the interpersonal issues in families.

TRUST: Can you see past my color? Can you see me as an individual?

LOYALTY: How committed are my parents?

ACCEPTANCE & REJECTION: Can my parents accept minority art, music, clothes and foods? Would my parents be comfortable being in a minority? Could they be the only white people in a black church? Could they participate in a church service as a minority? This shows attachment and connection.

The bottom line is that we are ALL victims of racism.

Tape 3 of 4: ***“Parenting Tasks in Transracial Adoptions”*** is approximately 20 minutes in length.

Racism and prejudice exist. When do you tell children about racism? This is a question asked by adoptive parents. The answer is that you tell them when they start asking questions. Taking away a child’s innocence is painful.

It is important to explain the rationale and purpose for racism and discrimination. Racism is not accidental. It often comes from the fear of the unknown. People do what they were taught. There are double standards.

A child must understand that he may never get his dream job. It may not be that he is less qualified.

It is necessary to employ selective confrontation. In other words, don’t confront every time you are angry. Your goal dictates your strategy. Your goal dictates your response. Timing is important. Sometimes you have to avoid confrontation. What do you do with your anger?

You cannot be all things to your children is something we, as parents, need to realize. “I need to see those who look like me.” Interaction with other black people/role modeling is crucial.

You impact other minority children who come behind you. Children are seen as a minority first and then as an individual. You represent your race. Don’t embarrass your people. What you do as an individual effects your group.

All of the points included in this video are messages that children get either as things that have been told to them specifically or just from their own observations of the world around them

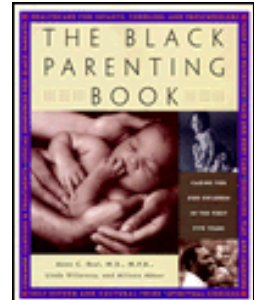
Conscious involvement in the selection of friends and associates for your child is important. It is important

and meaningful for your child if you join minority clubs and organizations.

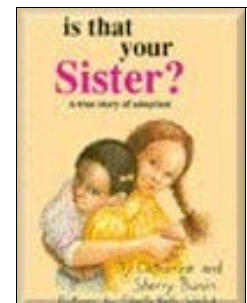
The sources of loss for the adopted child include his birth family and his birth community. These issues impact on how the child feels about his adoptive family and, by extension, how he feels about his adoptive community.

Tape 4 of 4: ***“Assessing A Family’s Ability to Adopt Transracially”*** is approximately 36 minutes in length. I feel that this last video in the set of four should be viewed by every family who is considering transracial adoption. It promotes honest introspection as to a family’s willingness to consider all the additional challenges that are involved in this type of adoption. Interracial adoption is not for everyone. It is better to make the decision that this is not something that your family is equipped to do than to have an adoption disrupt.

NATALIE HAMILTON
WARMLINE WORKER
NJ•ARCH



The Black Parenting Book:
Caring for our children in the first five years
By Anne C. Beal, MD, MPH,
Linda Villarosa, and
Allison Abner



is that your Sister?
A true story of adoption
By Catherine and Sherry Bunin

Check out a complete listing at www.njarch.org or contact the warmline.



ASK OUR EXPERTS

E-MAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS AT WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG



Barbara A. Rall, LCSW

Have a question that needs expert advice? E-mail or call the warmline; we would be happy to assist you! Frequently asked questions and responses from the staff will be published in future newsletters.



Question: I recently learned that I was adopted. I am 35 years old, married with two children. I always wondered why I didn't resemble either of my parents. Whenever I asked about this, my parents always said I was just like them. My mother would even tell me stories about her labor and delivery. Three weeks ago I had a letter from an adoption agency saying my birth mother wanted to make contact with me. When I confronted my parents they admitted I was adopted. My emotions are out of control. What should I do?

Answer: It is always a shock to learn something profound about one's origins from a stranger rather than one's parents. It is normal to feel angry and betrayed that you were not let in on this secret. In many cases extended family members knew the facts, but the adopted person did not.

At this point, you are about to ride an emotional roller coaster. You will most probably want to discuss your feelings with someone else who can understand what you are experiencing. I recommend joining a local support group or seeing a counselor who is familiar with adoption issues. Before you proceed to deal with

your adoptive parents and the "new" relatives who have requested contact, it is important to deal with your own feelings. Most people who learn about their adoption as adults find themselves questioning their very identity as they also recognize all of the clues about their adoptive status that their families denied or dismissed through the years.

When you feel comfortable sitting with your parents, I hope they will tell you the facts of how you came to be with them. Years ago, infertility and adoption carried shameful connotations for some people. In many cases, adoptive parents believed they were sparing their children heartache if they didn't tell them. Of course, it is not healthy to keep secrets in families, but certain beliefs die hard.

You can approach the adoption agency that wrote you to obtain non-identifying information. Most agencies will meet with adopted adults and discuss the contents of their records without revealing names or addresses. In your case, since your birth mother has requested contact, you can decide if you want to have direct

contact.

When the adopted person is "found" it is often more difficult than if that person did the "searching." Adoption implies that decisions were made for you when you were too young to play a part in the plan. Being found stirs up the lack of control that accompanies adoption. Keep in mind that you can control the pace of development of this new relationship. Doing that can help you feel empowered.

Some people prefer to correspond through the agency at first rather than reveal surnames and addresses. Others feel comfortable with telephone contact and some move almost immediately to in person meetings. There is no one right way to manage this. You will know what feels comfortable for you and you can always discuss your feelings with other support group members. While you are now shocked, angry and surprised, you are about to embark on a journey into your origins. There will be roadblocks and set backs along the way, but with the support of other adoption triad members, your family and others, I believe you will find the trip challenging and enlightening.

MORRIS COUNTY FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION POT LUCK DINNER MEETING: DYFS TRANSFORMATION PLAN DESCRIBED

The senior staff of NJ•ARCH had the pleasure of attending Ed Cotton's talk given at the *Morris County Foster Parents Association* on Wednesday, June 23 in Succasunna, NJ.

Mr. Cotton, who is the current Division of Youth and Family Services Director, was the special guest speaker. Mr. Cotton has been the Director of DYFS for about one year. During this talk, Mr. Cotton explained some of the highlights of the restructuring of DYFS.

A bit of history: A lawsuit against DYFS had been in process since 1999 and when Mr. McGreevey became Governor, he decided to settle the suit. In June of this year, a federal judge approved a state plan to overhaul New Jersey's child welfare agency (DYFS), saying he hoped it "will be the start of a new day for the children of New Jersey."

The plan's broad goals are to base child welfare services in individual communities and to increase the number of foster families in the state. A five person panel designed the settlement. Only one member of the panel is a New Jersey resident. The panel met with DYFS staff and community groups.



Edward E. Cotton
Director—Division of Youth
and Family Services

One hundred and fifty people offered input into the process. Only 10 to 15 of those folks were from DYFS.

The plan was finalized in early June. It has hundreds of benchmarks and the implementation will be monitored for 18 months by the panel and several years after that by a judge. The budget has not yet been approved by the legislature, but Mr. Cotton says there will be \$675,000,000 allocated the first year and \$180,000,000 the following year.

Currently 3% of DYFS assets are focused on abuse prevention. That amount will be greatly increased in the new plan. Since it is a five year plan, it will be phased in over time.

Given the audience of foster parents, Mr. Cotton focused on the parts of the plan that would be of most interest to those in attendance.

One of the goals of the transformation is the standardization of a practice model. As an example, Mr. Cotton pointed out that New Jersey had 32 different telephone numbers for reporting abuse and neglect depending on time of day and area in the state. Now there is one statewide number available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. If a report is accepted, a visit will be made in 24 hours. The investigation will be complete in 60 days. Reports will be either substantiated or unfounded. No longer will people struggle with a history of unsubstantiated reports. Voluntary placements will be eliminated. Instead, families will be given services in their homes.

Since paramours cause a disproportionate number of injuries to children, there will be new policies with more intense investigations. Children will remain in the system until they are 21 if they choose to do so. An assessment of residential placements showed that 30 to 35% of the children placed don't need to be there. They will be placed in foster homes or treatment homes instead. There will be more use of the in-home mobile crisis network and the District Offices will

DID YOU KNOW?

THERE ARE **150,000**
WAITING CHILDREN IN THE
UNITED STATES.

2,446 OF THESE CHILDREN ARE IN
NEW JERSEY.

234 OF THESE CHILDREN ARE
CURRENTLY IN SELECT HOMES
(FOSTER HOMES WITH THE GOAL OF
ADOPTION).

THE REMAINING **2,212**
CHILDREN ARE WAITING FOR A
PERMANENT HOME.

THIS JUST IN!

NJ•ARCH
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
BARBARA RALL, WAS
INTERVIEWED ON
WTMR RADIO 800.0.
THE SHOW WILL
AIR ON 8/13 BETWEEN
8-8:30 PM.

(Continued on page 6)

DYFS TRANSFORMATION PLAN DESCRIBED (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 5)

have funds for flexible services.

DYFS will get a new computer system to track cases. Families will be considered "Resource Families" whether they are adoptive, foster, kinship or birth families. DYFS will assign support personnel which will carry case loads of 30 families each. New foster homes will be licensed within 90 days of a completed application process. DYFS will employ neighborhood recruiters for the 46 District Offices and all efforts will be made to place

children in their own neighborhoods so they can continue to attend the same school. There will be an increase in the training requirements for foster parents, but added flexibility so that speakers at support group meetings and other educational endeavors can be credited as training hours. The Adoption Resource Centers will be disbanded. Adoption specialists will be assigned to each District Office and will advise workers about the adoption process. A new position will be created

called Adolescent Specialist to work with older children in care.

Mr. Cotton then opened the meeting to questions. The foster parents were interested in clarifying how the new regulations would impact on them and several noted bottlenecks and shortcomings in the system. Mr. Cotton gave them advice on how to correct these problems.

Overall it was a very exciting evening and we thank the Morris County in Foster Parents Association (MCFPA) for hosting this event.

NJ•ARCH currently has over 1,000 books, videos and articles available for loan. Log onto our website to view all the resources available to you from our organization. You will be glad you did!

DYFS FEATURED CHILD: LOTTIE

Lively and fun loving, Lottie has a sweet disposition and a very strong will. She enjoys dress-up games, playing with dolls and riding her first bike. She attends church regularly and receives special education services to support her academic needs. Lottie has experienced multiple placements in her young life, and, as a result, oppositional behaviors, including fighting and lying, initially interfered with her adjustment to school and foster care. Individual therapy is helping her deal with repeated separations

from her birth family, and medication is helping her focus better. A working relationship between her birth mother and her foster parent has had a very positive effect on improving Lottie's behavior. Nonetheless, the family who chooses Lottie must understand and respect her attachment to her birth mother. Overall, Lottie has shown remarkable stamina in her ability to withstand significant misfortune in her young life. Permanency with a loving, supportive and energetic family could make



LOTTIE, AGE 12

all the difference for this spirited youngster.

For more information about adopting Lottie or other children like her, please contact the Recruitment Specialist at 201.261.2800 Ext. 247

Comments or Questions about NJ•ARCH or this newsletter?

Contact us at warmline@njarch.org or call us at 973-763-2041

ADOPTION AND THE SCHOOLS: DEAR TEACHER (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)
are formed by adoption. If your school has family week, that is a great opportunity to discuss adoption.

Student of the week: Have your child tell about their country in which they were born or tell about their own adoption story.

Family Tree: This is always a tricky one; help create alternatives to this assignment such as “A Loving Tree”, “Caring Relationship Tree” or help create a diagram which shows all the members of the adoption “constellation” – all those involved with the child prior to and after their adoption –

including any foster parents.

Celebrate Diversity: Many adopted children do not look like their parents due to their ethnic background. Celebrate your child’s roots; remember, when you adopt a child from another country or background, your family becomes part of that background as well. Embrace their heritage and share it.

Positive Adoption Language: Using the right words like “adoption plan” instead of “abandoned” could make all the difference in the world in how your child feels about themselves. Help educate your teacher and students about Positive

Adoption Language. For a listing of Positive Adoption Language (PAL) see Adoptive Families Magazine website at <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/pdf/PositiveLanguage.pdf>.

There are many other great articles on their website including a wonderful “Dear Teacher” letter that has some great Q&A’s that could be great for your child’s teacher and your child. <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/pdf/DearTeacher.pdf>

So this fall, become an advocate for your child; teach your teacher what it means to be adopted. You child will be glad you did.

Resources at a Glance

“ADOPTION AND THE SCHOOL: A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHER”

Available from FAIR at www.fairfamilies.org or through the NJ •ARCH Library. Consider purchasing copies for your children’s schools.

THE CENTER FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT AND EDUCATION (CASE)

offers a program called S.A.F.E at School: Support for Adoptive Families by Educators. On-line at www.adoptionsupport.org or by phone at 301.593.9200.

THE NATIONAL ADOPTION INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

offers helpful fact sheets on adoption and school issues. http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_school.cfm

RAINBOW KIDS

offer a great Teachers Guide to Adoption that you can refer your teacher to. Find it at: <http://www.rainbowkids.com/802teachers.htm>

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES MAGAZINE ARTICLE:

Should we tell our son’s teacher that he was adopted? <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=838>

ROOTS AND WINGS ARTICLE:

To Tell or Not to Tell: What do you say to the school about adoption and your child? <http://www.adopting.org/rwtell.html>

BORN IN MY HEART: SPEAKING OF ADOPTION IN THE CLASSROOM

<http://www.liglobal.com/born/adopt.html>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

MORRIS COUNTY FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION

The Morris County Foster Parents Association (MCFPA) was founded in 1974 as a support for foster parents in the Morris County area. The group holds parent support meetings on the third Wednesday of every month, September through June. Their regular meeting place is the Morris County DYFS District Office, but they have been meeting at the Eisenhower School in Succasunna for the last few months while the DYFS office is under construction. Their two major social

activities are their Holiday Party and Gift Drive in December, and their Swim Picnic in July or August. They also maintain a clothing pantry for foster and adoptive parents to share clothing for children in their care, and offer backpacks to children as they enter out-of-home care.

The group welcomes foster and adoptive parents from the Morris County area to participate in their activities. They are affiliated with Foster and Adoptive Family

Services, a statewide agency that provides training support services to foster and adoptive parents. Information about the MCFPA can be found at their web site: www.morrisfpa.org, or by calling: Michelle and Bud Cannavero at 908.850.8303.



NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

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*The one-stop
resource
for those
touched
by adoption.*

COME CHAT WITH US

Ever had the urge to speak to someone about adoption-related issues or ideas and not sure where to start or who to call? NJ•ARCH's chat room may be a perfect place to start....

NJ•ARCH hosts numerous on-line, live chats; simply log onto www.njarch.org and select "Chat Room" on the left column; select "agree" at the bottom of the "Rules of the Chat Room" screen, and join our chat! It's that easy. NJ•ARCH moderates various topics including general

adoption, birth parent, search and reunion, young teen, and older teen chats.

Check our schedule below and join us; it's a great place

to ask questions and chat with someone who may have the same concerns or ideas you have. You will be glad you did!

General Adoption Chat:

Tuesdays 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Young Teen Chat:

Wednesdays 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Search and Reunion Chat:

2nd and 4th Wednesday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Older Teen Chat:

Wednesdays 7:00 pm-8:00 pm

General Adoption Chat:

Saturdays 11:00 am - 12:00 pm



If you have any questions, please contact NJ•ARCH.