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- Free Lending Library
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- Support Group Advocacy
- Upcoming Events



www.cafsnj.org

The Best Time to Tell Your Child They Were Adopted: A Research Study



A study led by Montclair State University Counseling Professor Amanda Baden, Ph.D. found that adults who did not learn of their adoptions until after the age of three (3) reported greater emotional distress and overall lower life satisfaction than those who found out at an earlier age. The older adoptees were when their status was disclosed, the greater the level of distress they were likely to experience. "Delaying Adoption Disclosure: A Survey of Late Discovery Adoptees" is the first study of its kind undertaken in the United States. Published in the Journal of Family Issues in May, 2019. Its findings challenge the long standing recommendations as to when adoptive parents should tell their children they were adopted. Past options included waiting until after the age of four (4) or much older to tell their child he/she was adopted.

"A lot of people think children can't understand the nuances

and complexities of adoption when they're young," says Baden, who is herself an adoptee and an adoptive parent. "I often tell families that they can use children's books as guides. As children's books get more detailed and complex as children get older, so should the details and explanations of adoption."

Baden, who led a Montclair State University team that included four adoptees and two adoptive parents notes that two independent researchers also collaborated on the study. "They were both late discovery adoptees and were part of a large community of adoptees who learned of their adoptions as adults. They wanted to explore the impact of delayed disclosure on coping and on adoptees' lives."

For late discovery adoptees, or LDAs, it is the betrayal and long series of lies that cause the most distress. "Growing up thinking that you know your heritage and then learning that what you have been told was false is

extremely distressing for LDAs," she explains. "It can trigger larger issues around identity – and identity is already pretty complex. To wait until middle childhood, adolescence or even adulthood to tell a person that he or she was adopted means that the families would have had to tell many lies, half-truths and total fabrications by the time the truth is finally shared or discovered."

As one study respondent, who had not learned of her adoption until she was 49, told the researchers, "Realizing that you don't know who you are is life changing. Every relationship in my life changed at that moment. I am much more guarded in every aspect now. Finding out that everyone knew and I didn't is probably the single most traumatic event of my life."

The study's 254 respondents completed an online survey. "In my field, that's a huge sample," says Baden.

(Continued on page 2)

ADOPTEE'S BIRTHRIGHT ACT—UPDATE

DID YOU KNOW?



FOR ADULT ADOPTEE'S
BORN AND/OR ADOPTED IN
NEW JERSEY TO REQUEST
THEIR ORIGINAL BIRTH
CERTIFICATE
AND/OR

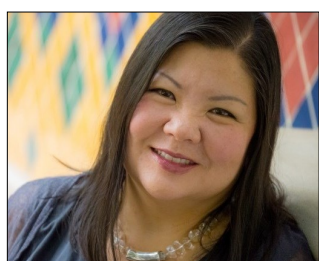
FOR BIRTHPARENTS TO FILL
OUT SOCIAL/ MEDICAL AND
OTHER INFORMATION,
LOG ONTO:

"NEW RECORDS SYSTEM
FOR BIRTH PARENTS,
ADOPTED ADULTS." AT
[HTTP://WWW.NJ.GOV/
HEALTH/VITAL/ADOPTION/](http://www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption/)

**INTERESTED IN THIS
ADOPTION DISCLOSURE
TOPIC?**

VISIT THE WEBSITE OF
AMANDA BADEN, PH.D. AT
[WWW.TRANSRACIALADOPTION.NET](http://www.transracialadoption.net)

OR REACH HER VIA
E-MAIL AT
BADENA@MONTCLAIR.EDU.



On January 1, 2017, the Adoptees Birthright Act, Public Law 2014, c. 9 was implemented by the NJ Office of Vital Statistics, allowing adoptees born and/or adopted in New Jersey to request an uncertified copy of their Original Birth Certificate (OBC). As of mid-July, over 5,539 adult adoptees requests have been completed by the NJ Office of

Vital Statistics. After receiving their OBC, many adoptees have contacted NJ ARCH and/or the NJ Coalition for Adoption Reform & Education (NJ CARE) for resource information on support groups, search specialists, mental health professionals and more. For more information about the Act, directions, and to download the forms, please visit our website at www.njarch.org

and select "NJ Adoptees Birthright Act" or visit www.nj-care.org or go directly to the "New Records System for Birth Parents, Adult Adoptees" at www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption. Birthparents who wish to share their contact information and/or health, family history may also use this website.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE (CON'T FROM PAGE 1)

"So many adoption-related groups in this country are just now opening their records." The research team also explored the adoptees' coping strategies. Study respondents reported that open communications, supportive relationships and contact with birth relatives and other adoptees were helpful.

"One of the most interesting findings was that, if we don't account for coping behaviors, those who experienced the most distress from delayed adoption disclosure were adolescents," Baden notes. "However, when we accounted for the increased coping skills and options available to adults, we understood that distress actually increased as people got older. Our findings really emphasize how secrecy and lies in adoption become corrosive to those involved." Baden's findings represent a critical step in increasing the understanding of the negative long-

term impact of withholding adoption status and information from adoptees, and are likely to prove helpful to families, child welfare workers, adoption professionals, researchers and clinicians.

Baden, who leads Montclair State's adoption research team, and focuses her own research on transracial adoption, counseling, therapy, identity and racial ethnic issues in adoption, hopes this new study could ultimately result in new uniform guidelines for adoption disclosure. "I'm honored to be able to make this contribution to the community," she says.

Baden's research was recently featured in an article by Ashley Feters (herself an adoptee) in *The Atlantic* and has prompted much conversation on social media.* To read the research summary "Delaying Adoption Disclosure: A Survey of Late Discovery Adoptees" published May 2019 Journal of

Family Issues see <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0192513X19829503>.

To read *The Atlantic* article, please log onto https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/07/adoption-disclosure-study/594496/?fbclid=IwAR3QOqU_GtyVh2PutNEApIO-EFyhWLVg1PM6JohsjzzgOtEEENowy67ZM.

* Article content from <https://www.montclair.edu/newscenter/2019/07/22/the-best-time-to-disclose-adoption-status-to-children/>

Looking for counseling and/or support about this topic? Contact NJ ARCH at 877-4ARCHNJ (877-427-2465) or e-mail us at warmline@njarch.org for the list of Post-Adoption Counselors and support groups in your area.

DID YOU KNOW?



**NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL
ADOPTION MONTH!
DID YOU KNOW...**

**THERE ARE OVER
123,000 CHILDREN
WAITING FOR FOREVER
FAMILIES IN
THE U.S.**

**THE AVERAGE WAIT FOR
A CHILD IN FOSTER CARE
TO BE ADOPTED IS
THREE YEARS.**

**OVER 20,000 CHILDREN
IN THE U.S AGE OUT OF
THE FOSTER CARE
SYSTEM EVERY YEAR
WITH NO FAMILY OR
PERMANENT HOME.**

CONSIDER ADOPTION!



NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

**NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL
ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH**

**NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY IS
NOVEMBER 23, 2019**

Every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, family courts and state departments across the U.S. celebrate National Adoption Day. This day raises awareness of the more than 123,000 children currently in foster care waiting for permanent, loving families. This special day has helped the dreams of many children and families come true. Since it debuted in 2000 the awareness raised by National Adoption Day has helped over 70,000 children move from foster care to a forever family. This year, **National Adoption Day** will be Saturday, November 23rd. Policy makers, practitioners, advocates, state agencies and family courts work together to finalize the adoptions of hundreds of children throughout the country. Since its inception, National Adoption Day has helped those children move from foster care to forever families. Many New Jersey Department

of Children and Families (DCF) county offices will be celebrating National Adoption Day by finalizing adoptions throughout the state. Please join us in celebrating these children joining their forever families! For more information log onto:

www.nationaladoptionday.org.



DCP&P WAITING CHILDREN



Isaiah Born 9/2007

Smart, silly, active and inquisitive are words that describes Isaiah best. He will win you over with his dimples and infectious smile. A very active boy who loves riding his bike, swimming, playing football, soccer and going to the park. He also enjoys playing video games and watching his favorite TV show "Miami Swat." Isaiah

has a passion for and is very knowledgeable about different makes and models of cars. Inately observant and helpful, a career as a police officer, EMT or firefighter could be in his future. Isaiah's forever family would have to be willing to support ongoing contact with his siblings.



Rahkim Born 7/2016

Meet Rahkim, lovingly referred to as Rocky. A real snuggle bug who loves to be held, cuddled and massaged. This mild man-

nered little guy will steal your heart and brighten every day with his infectious smiles, hugs and kisses. He is all giggles when he is the center of attention or being tickled or even hears funny voices and sounds. Easily entertained by sensory toys including his personal favorite, a vibrating tube. In quiet times he enjoys being read to or listening to a good jazz tune or lullaby. This cutie loves trips to the park where he can swing while kicking his arms and legs and enjoying the breeze on his face. Rocky needs a family who is sure to find so much joy in watching him explore the world and continue to grow and mature. For more information on Isaiah and/or Rahkim please contact Kristy Stone at 609-888-7676 or e-mail Kristy.stone@dcf.nj.gov.

ASK OUR EXPERT

Question: *We adopted two children who are multi-racial. Do you have some specific recommendations on how we can help them survive and thrive in the racial climate of today's world?*

Answer: Helping children of color survive and thrive today begins with having our eyes wide open to the racial profiling, microaggressions, acts of violence and objectification that many are subjected to. Using "survive" signals you are not naïve to the physical, emotional, and psychological risks that people of color face daily and that is where we must begin.

As a white parent to children of color, it is critical that you see the harsh and often painful reality that your multi-racial children will indeed be treated differently simply because of the color of their skin. Without that recognition, it will be so difficult to be active in protecting and preparing your children for what they will surely face in the world. Here are some ideas you may want to consider:

- Constantly dig deeper to understand your racial identity, process your own feelings about how people of color are treated and be sure you are taking care of yourself so you can be strong, present, and active in protecting the children you are parenting.

- Talk openly, honestly, and often about racial dynamics and incidents that occur related to differences of race, class, and culture. This includes having "the talk" – a very necessary and practical conversation all parents and grown-ups need to have with children and young people of color about what to do to stay as safe as possible when you are pulled over, profiled, stopped in a store, etc. Headlines will provide all of the fodder you need to be proactive in these discussions. Approach these conversations with confidence and process your emotions first. Have these conversations with your children, family, friends, colleagues, etc.

- Build authentic relationships with people of color and continually expand your family. While it is not the person of color's job to be consulting on all things race-related, being in true friendships will give everyone the ability to connect and share perspectives. Having a diverse community is healthy for everyone and ultimately shows your children that you are committed to embracing people that look like them and share their experiences.

- Become a fierce advocate for your child within the systems, namely schools. This begins with asking questions and being in close touch with educators and faculty members. Ask about everything from lesson plans to data on suspension

rates to understand how the school operates and hold professionals accountable for the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of children and young people of color.

- And last but not least, be more culturally expansive and open. Getting out of your comfort zone does not always mean tackling the toughest stuff. Show interest in music, art, cuisine, and religion so the multi-racial children you are parenting will have the freedom to experiment and explore elements of their cultures of origin along with you. Also, knowing where you stand on culturally relevant movements (like Black Lives Matter and trans-racially adopted person Colin Kaepernick's "Know Your Rights" campaign) is important as well as celebrating individuals that are standing up for racial justice.

Being a white parent to children of color today means you will have to double-down on being uncomfortable as well as being fully committed to preparing them for survival in a world that seems to get more complex by the minute. As you continually up your game you are not only creating layers of protection for your children's survival you are also building a solid foundation, which undoubtedly will help them to thrive!

DO YOU KNOW?



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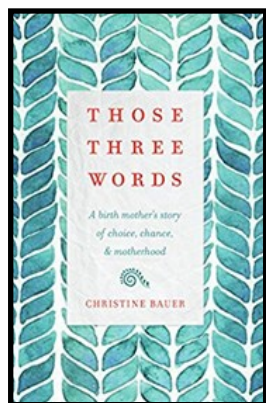
Welcome to our library corner!

Our free lending library is filled with books for children, teens, parents, and professionals. We are always adding new books to our deep collection of old favorites. This edition of Natalie's Library Corner features some new memoirs. Come take a look...



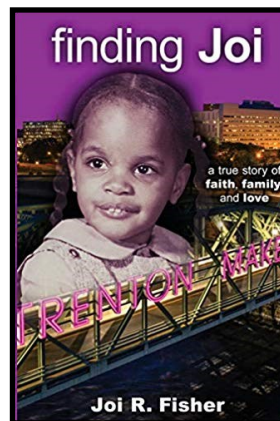
Those Three Words: A Birth Mother's Story of Choice, Chance, and Motherhood by Christine Bauer is a beautifully written memoir. Christine Bauer is a birth mother who honestly details her shock and fear on discovering she is pregnant at the beginning of her first year at college. She considers all her options and ultimately makes an open adoption plan for her baby. She chooses the adoptive parents and remains in contact with them throughout her child's life. She poignantly describes her thoughts and feelings throughout the years as she moves on to marry and raise children. When her birth daughter turns 18, they reunite and begin a new rela-

tionship that includes her extended family and the adoptive family. Ms. Bauer shares emails and letters between herself, her birth daughter, and the adoptive family. With amazing clarity and engrossing detail, Ms. Bauer leads the reader through her life journey as a birth mother and the connections, both biological and emotional, that significantly impact her life.

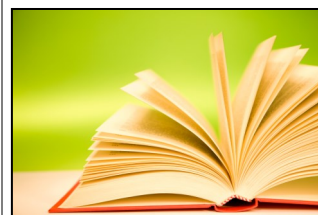


Finding Joi: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Love by Joi R. Fisher is a poignant and honest memoir. Ms. Fisher was born and adopted in New Jersey. In her book, she chronicles her journey through childhood and adulthood as an adoptee. She begins by stating, "Growing up, I convinced myself that being adopted didn't bother me because I had such a great family. But the reality of it is that great parents do not erase the fact that my birth parents gave me

away." She adds, "Everyday life presents constant reminders that I don't know who I really am on the inside. As an adoptee, I have always had this overwhelming desire to find out my identity. *Finding Joi* is not just a play on words or an oxymoron; it is my truth, my journey to find the missing links to my biological roots." Ms. Fisher's search for her birth family coincides with the passing of the New Jersey Adoptee Birthright Act and she herself is part of the historic signing event. Through DNA testing, a reunion with her birth family, and the receiving of her Original Birth Certificate, Ms. Fisher is able to put together the pieces of her identity and finally feel whole. Joi R. Fisher writes from her heart, sharing her true emotions as she navigates through her life and her adoption journey.



DID YOU KNOW?



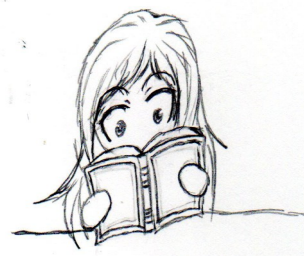
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*The one-stop
resource
for those
touched
by adoption.*

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CONFERENCES AND MORE

- September 22: Spence Chapin 5th Annual Adoption Fair; 10 am-2 pm, 410 East 92nd Street, NYC. info@spence-chapin.org or call 212-400-8150 for information.



- October 3 and 4: Bi-Annual Trauma Conference sponsored by Center for Child and Family Traumatic Stress at Kennedy Krieger Institute; "Addressing Trauma Across the Lifespan", Towson, MD.

- October 18: Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA) Mini-Conference for Adopted Kids ages 7-13 and their Parents/Guardians. West Orange NJ. Log onto www.cpfanjanj.org for information and to register.

- November 24: Adoptive Parents Committee Conference Annual Conference: St. Francis College, Brooklyn, NY. www.adoptiveparents.org/annual-conference.

Are you a Resource Parent?
Check out embrella (formally Foster and Adoptive Family Services-FAFS) for trainings, support group meetings and social events.



[Save the Date!](#)
Saturday, May 2nd 2020:
38th Annual Let's Talk Adoption Conference, coordinated by Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA), and Rutgers School of Social Work. www.cpfanjanj.org.

For more events and conferences, please log onto www.njarch.org.

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