

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Adoption Support Services for Fresno County



Happy Fall, REACH Families!

The REACH Team is ready to welcome the beautiful colors of Fall and the cooler days. As we transition seasons, we often find ourselves transitioning our habits. We may go from having an iced coffee in the morning to having a hot cup. It's what we call micro-culture: the little things we do within our families. Micro-cultures can also occur within family cultures. In those situations, whose traditions and habits do we follow then?

The beauty of REACH families is that we are a giant melting pot of cultures. So often, adoptive families are multi-racial and multi-cultural. While it comes with its complexities and difficulties, it is an opportunity for growth and bonding. Learning from each other's cultures and races to better understand family dynamics is crucial to solid bonding and security. When we feel accepted and heard, we also feel safe. As parents of children from another culture/race, we must educate ourselves about our children's values, beliefs, and traditions and respect them. This sends the message to adopted children that they are loved, welcomed, and wanted. By being culturally competent, we can better create our family micro-culture that includes everyone's culture. We create new traditions while incorporating those already a part of our children's lives.

This Fall issue of the REACH newsletter focuses on Cultural Competency. We have gathered information to support your cultural growth and journey to help with continued connection to your child. We included two articles, one Cultural Competency Activity, and a book review. We hope you find this information helpful in your parenting!

Sincerely,

The REACH Team

**"Learn, promote diversity, and encourage
further exploration of your child's culture."
– fosterva.org**

Fresno County Fall 2023

Inside This Issue

1. Greetings
2. Cultural Competence and Transracial Adoption
3. In a Diverse World, We Need Cultural Humility to Come Together
4. Cultural Competency Activity
5. Book Review
6. Support Group Calendar
7. REACH Services

Your Fresno REACH Support Team

Chad Valorosi, MSW

Program Director II
cvalorosi@aspiranet.org

Jade Yang, MSW

Program Supervisor
jayang@aspiranet.org

Fernando Aquino, MSW

REACH Social Worker
faquino@aspiranet.org

1320 East Shaw Ave., Suite 140

Fresno, CA 93710

Ph: 559.222.4969

Fax: 559.222.0106

aspiranetreachfresnocounty.org



Cultural Competence and Transracial Adoption

By Fernando Aquino, MSW

“Understanding the cultures of the youth we serve requires more than words and good intentions. The journey toward cultural competence requires the willingness to experience, learn from those experiences, and act.”
—Haley, 1999.

Adoption is a journey built to create a forever family for a child. Many adopted children have different cultural backgrounds from their adopted parents. Cultural competency is the ability to effectively connect with people from different cultures and backgrounds while keeping in mind one’s own culture and worldview. Cultural competency plays a role in most adoptions. Transracial adoption, or adoption by a parent who is of a different race and culture than a child, has always existed and many laws have been enacted to consider cultural competence.

ICWA, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, was created to prevent the disruption of Native American families when a child enters the foster care system. Similarly, the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 has prohibited state agencies from delaying or denying placements because of the color or ethnicity of prospective resource parents, adoptive parents, or children. MEPA acknowledges that children of Black and Brown backgrounds often spend more time in the child welfare system.

Data provided by the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for children and families, as well as the National Council for Adoption from 2020, documents:

- Black children: 92,237 in foster care/9,588 adopted
- Hispanic Children: 88,111 in foster care/11,631 adopted
- American Indian/Alaska Native Children 9,851 in foster care/936 adopted
- Multiracial Children: 31,669 in foster care/5,304 adopted

From the data above, we can see that resource and adoptive homes are needed. Specifically, families who are willing to learn about culture and how it impacts adopted children are needed. Children will thrive with families who consider their cultural differences a strength, allowing them to have connections to their birth-heritage and built-heritage. This matters because oftentimes, transracially adopted children face challenges in coping with feelings of being “different.” They may often struggle to develop a positive personal racial or ethnic identity, as well as cope with discrimination.

Numerous adoption advocates promote education on cultural competency, especially within transracial adoptions. For example, Angela Tucker is an adult adoptee who was adopted transracially. Her work documents her experience navigating two cultures, as well as uniting with her birth family. Angela offers mentorship to transracially adopted youth and is the author of her newest book titled, *You Should be Grateful: Stories of Race, Identity, and Transracial Adoption*. As the world of adoption evolves, we must continue to learn and adapt to new practices for assisting in bettering the lives of adopted youth. We encourage you to visit our REACH website for more articles on transracial/transcultural adoption and adoption competency.

References:

<https://affcnny.org/family-supports/transracial-transcultural/cultural-competence/>

<https://onlinedegrees.unr.edu/blog/transracial-adoption-statistics/>



In a Diverse World, We Need Cultural Humility to Come Together

By Beth Hurlbert, MFT

Our world, nation, state, and counties consist of different cultures. As individuals, most of us are made up of various cultures. When you add adoption to the mix you are actively adding more cultures, some unknown, to a likely already diverse family.

How we interact with others is made up of conscious responses and unconscious responses, which can impact our relationships. Conscious responses are called explicit bias, and we are aware of the choice that we are making. The unconscious responses are called implicit bias, where we are reacting to a situation or person and are not aware of our behavior and how it will affect others. These interactions and responses create the relationships we have with one another, good and bad.

Dr. Miguel E. Gallardo, PsyD, in his training titled “Lessons in Connectedness, Racial Capitalism, Implicit Bias and Colorism,” says that cultural humility is made up of five collaborative pieces working together to counter the stereotypes and imbalance that we see in the world. This cultural humility is what an adoptive family should strive for, so they can positively embrace those they are bringing into their family. Cultural humility includes:

1. A lifelong motivation to learn from others. When adding new family members to a family, we should have the interest to learn as much as we can from them. What did their holidays used to look like? What traditions did they have in their family? We also need to share our family traditions and cultures with the new family members, so they can learn who we are. Family scrapbooks are a great way for you to share your traditions and customs with those entering your family. Working on a Lifebook with children joining the family is a fun way for them to share their history and for you to learn about their culture.
2. Another piece of cultural humility is a critical self-examination of cultural awareness. Cultural information is fluid and changing. We need to be aware of how our culture and racial background shape our view of the world. When adopting we need to consider how our biases and reactions will affect a child. Also, by looking at our cultural

awareness, a light will be shined on biases of which we may not be aware of.

3. Interpersonal respect for others is an important part of cultural humility and is very important in adoptive families. We need to accept that others, even family members, may have different experiences and perspectives from us. Just as we want others to be respectful of our beliefs and experiences, we need to be respectful of theirs. Actively listen to what they have to say, with an open mind, and validate what was shared. You may not know what it was like to grow up in their home but you can let them know they have the right to feel the way they do and that you have heard them.
4. The development of a mutual partnership that addresses power imbalance is also a part of cultural humility. By working together, we can stop treating the individual like they are the problem and focus on repairing the system. By addressing imbalance together we will treat each person fairly. We also want to have a positive mindset about cultural differences. In an adoptive family, we can address this imbalance by teaching others who ask “Were they adopted?” or “Are they yours?” that these can be hurtful and insensitive questions.
5. Finally, an oriented stance open to new cultural information. As an individual, we want to be seen as an individual, not lumped in as part of a group. We want to listen to others’ perspectives and consider them as unique individuals. With our adoptive children, we want to see things through their lens of experience. Even if they are siblings and come from the same family they will each have a different perspective of what that experience was like.

In closing, just as we want others to accept and appreciate our cultural roots, we must honor the heritage of children who have been adopted. With a positive, open, cultural awareness we will be able to help our children on their journey to figure out their identity and shape them into accepting, caring human beings.



Cultural Competency Activity

By Elizabeth Hanson, MA

Are you looking for new ways to teach your children cultural competency? One fun, interesting, and educational way is to take them to a local museum! Museums offer a great deal of information for your children and family regarding artwork, artifacts, and more! Museums such as The Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum (Long Beach), The Fowler Museum (Los Angeles), The California Indian Museum & Cultural Center (Santa Rosa), Skirball Cultural Center (Los Angeles), and the Chinese American Museum (Los Angeles) are all located in California. Additional museums include the Malki Museum (Banning), La Plaza De Cultura y Artes (Los Angeles), Treasure Island Museum (San Francisco), and The Getty (Los Angeles). Take your children on a magical journey to explore ethnic cultures, practices, and diverse customs.

Here is a great activity offered at the California Museum in Sacramento! It may be a drive for some families, but a fun activity and a nice getaway to another town can be well worth it.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS FIESTA

Friday, October 13 • 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Celebrate the new exhibit *Arte Activista: Día de los Muertos 2023* at the California Museum's annual Día de los Muertos Fiesta on Friday, Oct. 13! Highlights include:

- Public opening of the new exhibit [Arte Activista: Día de los Muertos 2023](#)
- Appearances by exhibit artists
- [Mayahuel](#) food, drinks, and snacks for sale
- [Maquilli Tonatiuh Aztec Dancers'](#) performance and ceremonial blessing

- Honor friends and family members who have passed with a remembrance at the Community Altar
- Live music by [Mariachi Bonitas de Dinorah Klingler](#)
- Sugar Skull Workshops (\$15 materials fee)
- Mercado de los Muertos featuring pop-up shops from [John S. Huerta Arte](#) and other local artists and artisans.
- Costume contest with prizes
- Hands-on activities for kids suitable for ages 3 & up
- More fun for the entire family & all ages — don't miss it!

Any one of these museum experiences can enhance your child or children's education concerning cultural competency. You can enrich their experiences, be all-inclusive in your endeavors, and ensure the experiences you share are diverse with information from many cultures around the world. The list of museums above is only a short list of all the museums in California. We hope you have enjoyed this information and that you will use it to teach your children cultural competency.

References:

- <https://www.aam-us.org/2018/10/26/learning-cultural-competence/>
- <https://californiamuseum.org/visit/events-public-programs/fiesta-2023/>
- <https://naturespath.com/blogs/posts/14-activities-kids-learn-different-cultures>
- <https://californiamuseum.org/visit/events-public-programs/fiesta-2023/>

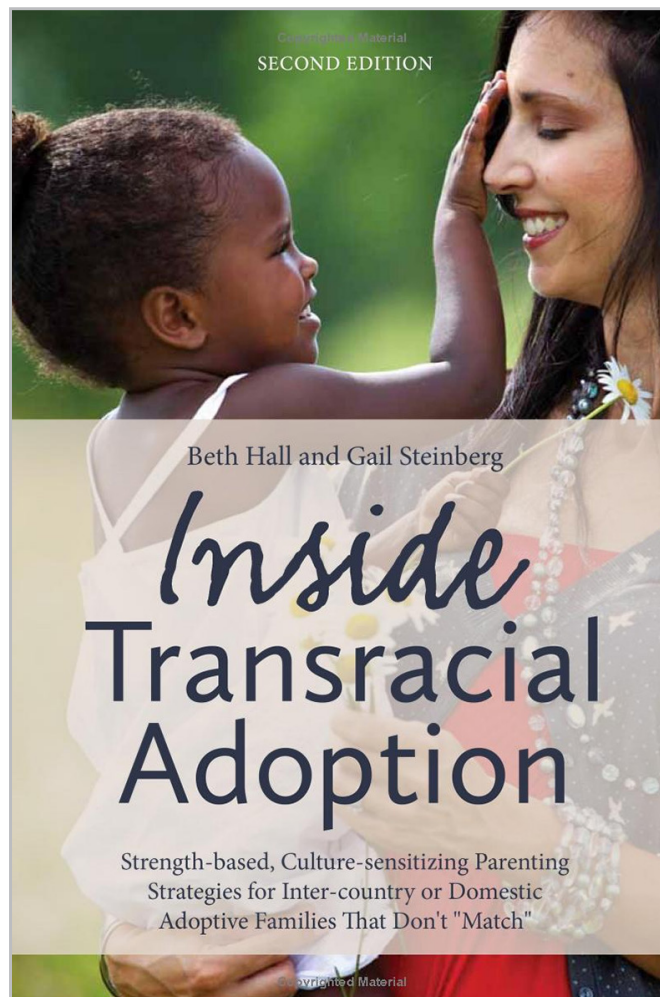
Inside Transracial Adoption

By: Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg

Book Review by Griselda Santillan Mejia, MA

Could a transracial adoption be something positive for everyone involved? How can parents support their adoptive children who are from a different race, ethnicity, or culture? *Inside Transracial Adoption* is a book written by transracial adoptive parents themselves. It's a great book where parents can get help in answering some of these questions, along with many others. This book gives an inside look at what this journey is like for parents and their child/children and it provides great guidance. A transracial adoption is a lifelong journey for both the child and their parents. While this journey is very beautiful, it can also be complex and can sometimes come with challenges. At first, some of the challenges may feel very difficult, yet they can be navigated if parents educate themselves and are well-prepared. When parents are well-educated on this topic, they gain confidence and will be prepared to work through challenges as they present themselves. The book also gives a glimpse into what children are facing. The authors put much emphasis on ensuring parents are given an inside look into the different perspectives adoptive children grow up with and reiterated the importance for parents to acknowledge the struggles their children will

face throughout their lifetime. In this book, you will learn how to help your child build a sense of identity and feel connected to their new family, but also not lose their culture/race of origin. If parents are well educated, they can also become their child's partner and supporter.



This book also does a great job of reminding parents of the importance of children continuing contact and relationships with others of their race and/or culture of origin. It encourages parents to be informed about important customs and traditions of their children's culture/ethnicity and how to implement these with their family so their children can feel like they have not lost this important part of their history. The book gives parents great information and advice on how they can be their child's advocate when faced with racism and discrimination. Although we wish this did not exist, the harsh truth is that children

from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds are still very prone to experience discrimination. The book *Inside Transracial Adoption* is a great resource to help parents learn skills and strategies and provides real-life examples that describe what it is like for parents who are experiencing a transracial adoption.

Support Groups & Events

October

19 Parent Café

10:00-11:30am - Zoom

24 Parent Support Group in English

6:00-7:30pm - In Person

25 Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30-11:00am - Zoom

November

15 Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30-11:00am - Zoom

16 Parent Café

10:00-11:30am - Zoom

28 Parent Support Group in English

6:00-7:30pm - In Person

December

19 Parent Support Group in English

6:00-7:30pm - In Person

20 Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30-11:00am - Zoom

21 Parent Café

10:00-11:30am - Zoom

REACH Support Groups for Parents

REACH Parent Support Group

6:00-7:30pm - In Person

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. The REACH Parent Support Group is offered on the fourth Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café

10:00-11:30am via Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Cafe provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the third Thursday of each month, 10:00-11:30am via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30-11:00am via Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Fernando Aquino llamando al número 559-222-4969 y preguntar por REACH o mandando email a faquino@aspiranet.org y se le enviará por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.



1320 E. Shaw Ave. #140
Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 222-4969
www.aspiranet.org

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Stockton, CA
PERMIT NO. 451



Fresno County
Department of Social Services
Clovis Campus-Building 5
380 W. Ashlan Ave.
Clovis, CA 93612



Aspiranet REACH Adoption Support Services for Fresno County

Educational/Support Groups – Monthly meetings where families are able to receive education/training and meet other adoptive families in the community.

REACH Newsletter – Quarterly newsletters filled with adoption articles, local trainings, book reviews, on-line resources and more.

Educational Workshops and Trainings – A variety of workshops and trainings will be made available.

Lending Library/Resource Directory– The REACH lending library is open and available for book review and check outs for families. A resource directory of local providers is also available to families.

Case Management – Ongoing case management is provided. REACH clients are provided with information, resource referral or other assistance as needed.

Crisis Counseling – Crisis intervention is available. Please contact our REACH staff for this support.