

The Bias Against African-American Children in U.S. Adoptions

Like HowStuffWorks on Facebook!



Susan Martini helps adopted daughter Erika wash her hands after dinner. Martini's family adopted Erika after fostering her from the time she was 5 weeks old. © NOAH K. MURRAY/STAR LEDGER/CORBIS

by Nichole Bazemore

March 22, 2016

With more than 100,000 U.S. children waiting to be adopted, why do so many **Americans** adopt overseas

(<http://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/parenting/adoption/alternatives-international-adoption.htm>)? And what part does race play in their decisions?

Researchers from the University of Vermont (UVM) discovered that although many white adoptive parents (<http://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/parenting/bonding/5-bonding-tips-for-adoptive-parents.htm>) were open to adopting children of other races, they drew the line at adopting African-American children.

<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/03/22/bias-african-american-children-us-adoptions>

they drew the line at adopting African-American children.

The United States **leads the world** (http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-03/uov-nss030416.php) in international adoptions. The National Center for Adoption reports that Americans completed **6,441 intercountry adoptions** (<http://www.adoptioncouncil.org/families/intercountry-adoption>) in 2014. (This is way down, though, from the peak of 22,000 international adoptions in 2004.)

f SHARE

🐦 TWEET

📌 PIN-IT

Meanwhile, there are about **108,000 children available for adoption** (<http://www.adoptioncouncil.org/families/foster-care>) in the U.S. as of July 2015, according to the National Council of Adoption. African-American children are

Like HowStuffWorks on Facebook!

Underrepresented — they make up about **24 percent** (<http://www.howstuffworks.com>) [http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/Tables/6674-children-in-foster-care-waiting-for-adoption-by-race-and-hispanic-origin?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/36,868,867,133,38/2638,2601,2600,2598,2603,2597,2](http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/Tables/6674-children-in-foster-care-waiting-for-adoption-by-race-and-hispanic-origin?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/36,868,867,133,38/2638,2601,2600,2598,2603,2597,2604,2602,2605,2606,2607,2608,2609,2610,2611,2612,2613,2614,2615,2616,2617,2618,2619,2620,2621,2622,2623,2624,2625,2626,2627,2628,2629,2630,2631,2632,2633,2634,2635,2636,2637,2638,2639,2640,2641,2642,2643,2644,2645,2646,2647,2648,2649,2650,2651,2652,2653,2654,2655,2656,2657,2658,2659,2660,2661,2662,2663,2664,2665,2666,2667,2668,2669,2670,2671,2672,2673,2674,2675,2676,2677,2678,2679,2680,2681,2682,2683,2684,2685,2686,2687,2688,2689,2690,2691,2692,2693,2694,2695,2696,2697,2698,2699,2700,2701,2702,2703,2704,2705,2706,2707,2708,2709,2710,2711,2712,2713,2714,2715,2716,2717,2718,2719,2720,2721,2722,2723,2724,2725,2726,2727,2728,2729,2730,2731,2732,2733,2734,2735,2736,2737,2738,2739,2740,2741,2742,2743,2744,2745,2746,2747,2748,2749,2750,2751,2752,2753,2754,2755,2756,2757,2758,2759,2760,2761,2762,2763,2764,2765,2766,2767,2768,2769,2770,2771,2772,2773,2774,2775,2776,2777,2778,2779,2780,2781,2782,2783,2784,2785,2786,2787,2788,2789,2790,2791,2792,2793,2794,2795,2796,2797,2798,2799,2800,2801,2802,2803,2804,2805,2806,2807,2808,2809,2810,2811,2812,2813,2814,2815,2816,2817,2818,2819,2820,2821,2822,2823,2824,2825,2826,2827,2828,2829,2830,2831,2832,2833,2834,2835,2836,2837,2838,2839,2840,2841,2842,2843,2844,2845,2846,2847,2848,2849,2850,2851,2852,2853,2854,2855,2856,2857,2858,2859,2860,2861,2862,2863,2864,2865,2866,2867,2868,2869,2870,2871,2872,2873,2874,2875,2876,2877,2878,2879,2880,2881,2882,2883,2884,2885,2886,2887,2888,2889,2890,2891,2892,2893,2894,2895,2896,2897,2898,2899,2900,2901,2902,2903,2904,2905,2906,2907,2908,2909,2910,2911,2912,2913,2914,2915,2916,2917,2918,2919,2920,2921,2922,2923,2924,2925,2926,2927,2928,2929,2930,2931,2932,2933,2934,2935,2936,2937,2938,2939,2940,2941,2942,2943,2944,2945,2946,2947,2948,2949,2950,2951,2952,2953,2954,2955,2956,2957,2958,2959,2960,2961,2962,2963,2964,2965,2966,2967,2968,2969,2970,2971,2972,2973,2974,2975,2976,2977,2978,2979,2980,2981,2982,2983,2984,2985,2986,2987,2988,2989,2990,2991,2992,2993,2994,2995,2996,2997,2998,2999,3000) of the children waiting for adoption. (The African-American population in the U.S. is 13 percent).



How do children fare in foster care?



As of 2009, there were about 423,773 children in foster care in the U.S. While some children may return to their original families, some are adopted and others simply age out of the system. Learn more about foster care with Cristen and Caroline.

Researchers at UVM interviewed 41 parents from the northeastern U.S. (all were white except one Asian) who had adopted 52 kids. Thirty-three of the children adopted came from other countries, mostly China, Korea and Guatemala. The researchers shared their findings in a report titled, "We Didn't Even Think About Adopting Domestically: The Role of Race and Other Factors in Shaping Parents' Decisions to Adopt Abroad." The main reasons the subjects chose to adopt kids from overseas were:

 SHARE

()

 TWEET

()

 PIN-IT

()

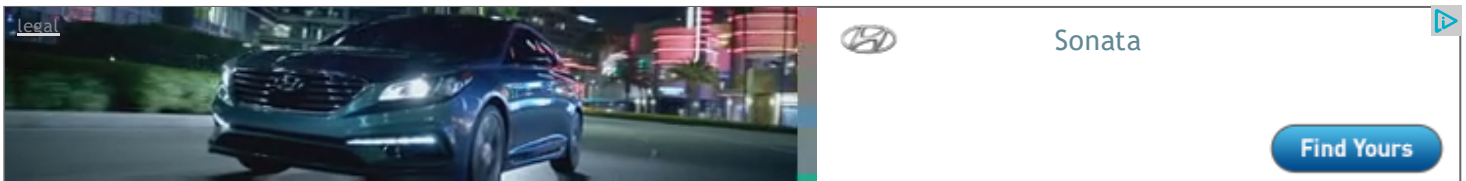
- Fear of birth parents changing their mind and wanting their child back
- Concern about open adoptions where birth parents maintain some contact with their child
- An assumption that adoptive children in the U.S. have more health issues due to alcohol or drug abuse by their mothers

Here's where it gets really interesting. While many of the parents surveyed said they were open to adopting children of any race — and even actively sought nonwhite children overseas — several drew a line in the sand when it came to black American children. In fact, 18 of the parents explicitly said they wouldn't adopt a black child. African-American children, in particular, were seen as "too different" physically and culturally.

Just two of the adopted children in the study group were African-American. The other four black children adopted came from other countries: Haiti, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"It was weird that we were fine with Asian. We were fine with South American. And we weren't with African American... Maybe I wasn't exposed or I just thought it would be too different."

— Jenny, study participant who adopted from



Nikki Khanna is a sociology professor who led the study. She notes via email that U.S. adoptions from Africa have more than tripled between 2003 and 2010. But she says it's not clear why the parents she interviewed found African children more adoptable than black American kids. "For these parents, it is possible that they perceive African-American culture as more ambiguous and less defined than that of Tanzanian or Congolese culture, for example, and hence more accessible to them. More research, however, is needed."

And then, there's the race issue. Khanna says many parents cited long-standing, contentious race relations between blacks and whites as a deterrent to adopting African-American kids. "They were hesitant to enter into a situation in which they themselves had to take up and address this history with their own African-American children. Perhaps some parents feel that if they adopt from Africa that they or their African children are somehow exempt from this history. I would argue, however, that that view is ill-conceived and highly problematic."

So, what can be done to reverse negative perceptions about adopting African-American kids? Khanna says trying to convince white parents to adopt these children, despite their reservations, isn't the right approach. She advocates more education about the adoption process in the U.S., in general. "Some parents [in the study] were put off by the rules and regulations surrounding adoption in the United States, and others simply felt ill-informed about the process of domestic adoption."

She adds that there should be a more open dialogue about transracial adoption, specifically as it relates to white parents adopting African-American children.

"Prospective adoptive parents need to understand the positives and negatives of transracial adoption – and perhaps, more knowledge may demystify the process and encourage more parents to adopt across racial lines."

NOW THAT'S ... SAD

An adoption in the U.S. can cost as much as \$50,000

(<http://www.adoptionhelp.org/qa/how-much-does-adoption-cost>), **and that cost tends to differ** (<http://www.npr.org/2013/06/27/195967886/six-words-black-babies-cost-less-to-adopt>) **according to the origin, race, sex and age of the child, as do waiting times involved, with white, American-born baby girls costing the most and older black boys the least.**

More to Explore

How Adoption Works (<http://people.howstuffworks.com/adoption.htm>)

10 Things You Need to Know About Adoption
(<http://health.howstuffworks.com/pregnancy-and-parenting/10-things-to-know-about-adoption.htm>)

Adoption and Racial Identity
(<http://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/parenting/adoption/adoption-and-racial-identity.htm>)

How Is the Black Lives Matter Movement Organized?



The #BlackLivesMatter movement is not longer a United States phenomenon; these protesters are at a rally in Melbourne, Australia. SCOTT BARBOUR/GETTY IMAGES

by Chris Opfer
August 1, 2016

Black Lives Matter means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. It's a racial justice movement (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed>), a rallying cry, a social media hashtag (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement>) and maybe even a political organization. For some, the movement is also a divisive force (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dan-patrick-black-lives->

matter_us_57800671e4b0344d514f4d7a) that has drawn a line between the police and the people and helped spawn some of the violence seen in the aftermath of high-profile, police-involved shootings. Even those detractors have to admit, however, that what started as a social media call for justice when George Zimmerman was acquitted of shooting and killing the unarmed black young man named Trayvon White in Sanford, Florida has become a global force.

What's not so clear is whether that's because of or despite the fact that BLM operates under a highly decentralized structure. It seems just about anyone can start up a Black Lives Matter outpost wherever they see fit.



Why do we protest?



Humans rarely seem to agree, but when we do the results can be staggering. How does the phenomenon called protesting actually work? In this episode, Robert and Julie examine the world of protest and share a few tips for surviving your next rally.

"An organization has to have a mission," says Christopher Neck, a management professor at Arizona State University. "In terms of a social or political group, it's really difficult to control the mission and the message in a decentralized situation."

BLM's mission, according to its **website** (<http://blacklivesmatter.com/>), is to promote "the validity of black life" and "(re)build the black liberation movement." Much of that work to date has centered on calling attention to police shootings of unarmed black men and to highlight racial inequities in the criminal justice system. But just how the movement should be carrying out that work sometimes depends on who you talk to. BLM's decentralized structure urges supporters to set up their own local chapters under the movement's flag. The group's grassroots founders Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi **serve as figureheads and organizers** (<http://www.blackvoicenews.com/news/news-wire/50048-black-lives-still-matters-to-grassroots-and-black-media.html>) but largely appear to let local chapters do their own thing.

own thing.

That arrangement has caused confusion at times. Some Black Lives Matter members and their supporters were left scratching their heads, for example, when a Seattle chapter **interrupted a Bernie Sanders rally** (<http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/bernie-sanders-event-shut-down-black-lives-matter-activists>) to accuse the lefty presidential candidate and his campaign of racial bigotry. One member of a separate BLM faction in Seattle later issued a formal apology. Then BLM's founders piped up to say they'd made no such contrition.

Similar uncertainty **unfolded in Atlanta** (<http://news.wabe.org/post/black-lives-matter-disavows-atlanta-president-sir-maejor>), when a man claiming to be president of the local BLM chapter appeared at a press conference with the city's mayor to promote dialogue between the movement and the local government. Other activists claiming the Black Lives Matter flag said instead that the man was an aspiring actor with little attachment to the group, freelancing in front of cameras for his own personal gain.

Those types of mixed messages aren't exactly unexpected in a loose organizational structure, according to Ben Pauli, a social science professor at Kettering University in Flint, Michigan. But the decentralized approach also has its benefits. That includes giving the movement an organic, authentic feel and allowing members the sense that they are shaping its direction.

VIDEO: STUFF THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW: 5 TERRIFYING STATISTICS ABOUT BEING BLACK IN AMERICA

Stuff They Don't Want You to Know: 5 Terrifying Statistics About Being Black in America HOWSTUFFWORKS

"When a movement like this starts up on a large scale, in a short time period and in many different places, it is often seen as capturing some kind of zeitgeist," Pauli says. "The idea assumes that it wouldn't be possible for the movement to arise in this way if many people weren't having similar experiences and feelings and needs. That gives it a sort of legitimacy."



Social Justice Warriors



Can social media change the world? So-called social justice warriors, slactivists and hashtag activists think so. In this episode, Cristen and Caroline dissect social media activism and its backlash and ponder the perils of political correctness.

BLM's structure looks a lot like the **Occupy Wall Street**

(<http://money.howstuffworks.com/occupy-wall-street.htm>) movement, which made a name for itself when protesters turned a park across the street from the financial center

name for itself when protesters turned a park across the street from the financial center of the world into an open air campsite. But Pauli, who has been involved in social activism surrounding the Flint water crisis, says Black Lives Matter might be better served by looking to the **Catholic Worker** (<http://www.catholicworker.org/>) movement. That decentralized social justice initiative has launched a number of service-oriented communities around the globe. It has also lived on for decades following the death of leader Dorothy Day. The Worker's work continues, according to Pauli, because of the example that Day set for the movement at large.

"I'm convinced that a lot of it has to do with a certain kind of leadership and a certain kind of authority," Pauli says of Catholic Worker's staying power. "Dorothy Day was not somebody who was looking for followers. I like to call hers an exemplary authority: what she was trying to inspire was not followers, but for people to live out the kinds of principles that she embodied in her own personal behavior, knowing that they would do it in a variety of ways."

On the other hand, Arizona State's Neck says BLM activists could also look to the business community for what might be an unexpected model if they want to control their **civil rights** (<http://history.howstuffworks.com/historical-events/civil-rights-movement.htm>) message. It starts with a red-headed, hamburger pushing clown.

"Instead of looking at a social activist organization, let's say you're a McDonald's franchisee," Neck says. "If you want to have the McDonald's name and you don't want to lose the money that you put in, you have to follow their rules."





A protester speaks out at a 2016 New York City rally against police brutality. DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

NOW THAT'S INTERESTING

Although the phrase and movement started in the United States, Black Lives Matter has become a slogan around the world, used recently at rallies in Australia, Canada, Ghana and beyond.

More to Explore

The Definitive Civil Rights Movement Quiz
(<http://history.howstuffworks.com/historical-events/civil-rights-movement-quiz.htm>)

How Occupy Wall Street Works (<http://money.howstuffworks.com/occupy-wall-street.htm>)

Why did Gandhi march 240 miles for salt?
(<http://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/salt-march.htm>)

Hear and Now: Car Accidents Won't Kill

Graham



HOWSTUFFWORKS

by Allison Loudermilk

August 1, 2016

More than 30,000 people died as a result of car accidents in 2014, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And that's just in the U.S. Whenever you mix humans with these mobile mashups of **metal and plastic and glass** (<http://auto.howstuffworks.com/under-the-hood/auto-manufacturing/5-materials-used-in-auto-manufacturing.htm>), humans don't come out on top.



Crash-Proof Humans, GMO Mosquit...





Researchers created a (hypothetical) human body evolved to withstand car crashes. Genetically modified mosquitoes could save millions of lives. Plus, higher compensation for CEOs doesn't indicate better long-term business performance: Why?

But what if we engineered humans to withstand car crashes? That's the premise behind the sculpture Graham, **reports** (<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/07/28/humans-were-built-withstand-a-car-crash-they-might-look-this>) Ben Bowlin for HowStuffWorks Now. Graham, with his crumple zones and other built-in bodily adaptations, is what you get when an artist (**Patricia Piccinini** (<http://www.patriciapiccinini.net/>))

), a trauma surgeon (Christian Kenfield) and a collision expert (David Logan) get together and play what-if.

Next up was Jonathan Strickland, who brought us **news** (<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/07/29/big-bucks-ceos-doesnt-mean-better-company-performance>) that may be helpful to your financial portfolio. According to a recent report from MSCI (<https://www.msci.com/documents/10199/91a7f92b-d4ba-4d29-ae5f-8022f9bb944d>), a research firm that caters to institutional investors, CEO compensation isn't necessarily tied to company performance. That is, paying big bucks to CEOs of mid-cap and large-cap public companies doesn't always correlate with better performance. In fact, researchers found the opposite to be true in their study of more than 400 companies.

Finally, Robert Lamb looked at some of the newest weapons in the war against

Finally, ROBERT LAMB looked at some of the newest weapons in the war against mosquitoes: mosquito factories. These factories are churning out bacteria-compromised or genetically modified **mosquitoes**

(<http://animals.howstuffworks.com/insects/mosquito.htm>) to defeat the enemy from the inside. And at least one of them, in Guangzhou, China, is claiming encouraging results.

That's our trio for the HowStuffWorks Now podcast this week, which is embedded for your listening pleasure in this article. If you like what you hear, **subscribe** (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/howstuffworks-now/id1107301102?mt=2>).

More to Explore

If Humans Were Built to Withstand a Car Crash, They Might Look Like This
(<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/07/28/humans-were-built-withstand-a-car-crash-they-might-look-this>)

Big Bucks for CEOs Doesn't Mean Better Company Performance
(<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/07/29/big-bucks-ceos-doesnt-mean-better-company-performance>)

Welcome to the Mosquito Factory
(<http://now.howstuffworks.com/2016/07/31/welcome-the-mosquito-factory>)