

Transracial Adoption and Family Coaching
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Someone once asked me why I didn't go to a more diverse college or perhaps even a historically black college. Why choose a school and town that pretty much mirrored the school and town I so desperately wanted out of? My response: ***Black people scared me. And because I wasn't a fan of being scared,*** I did my best to avoid them whenever possible. As sad and silly as this sounds, for years it was my truth.

This truth resulted in a long, lonely, and painful journey to a ***healthy racial identity***. While my parents did the best they could with what they knew, like me, they didn't know much. We had no benefit of history or hindsight, institutional support, books to guide us, or even ways of knowing what we were getting right or wrong. Instead we found ourselves being the clinical trials and day laborers of a grand and complex social experiment.

At Transracial Adoption and Family Coaching we believe that, in addition to belonging to an individual family, transracial adoptees are part of a larger family. As the elders of this family, we believe our first-hand personal and collective experiences as transracial adoptees place us in a unique position to equip transracial families with information, training, guidance, skills, and tools not available elsewhere. We invite you to take a moment and review our Declaration of Beliefs, Services, Biography, Media, and Contact Pages. We look forward to partnering with you and your child as you explore and address those critical questions of ***“Who am I?”, “Who do I want to be?”, and “How do others see me?”***

Our Beliefs

Parents who adopt transracially—that is, adopt children of a race or ethnicity that is not their own—face many challenges. Perhaps the greatest one is that of shepherding their child through the complex minefield of same-race identity formation. This task is all the more difficult for transracial families coming of age in heavily or exclusively white spaces. Transracial Adoption and Family Coaching is born out of a heartfelt desire to assist prospective and adoptive parents in identifying, understanding, and overcoming the inherent challenges and obstacles that come with creating and growing healthy and happy transracial families.

We Believe: Transracial families work best when adoptive parents come to the table with a pre-existing level of cultural competency as it relates to the children they are interested in adopting. This includes having had previous interaction with members of the child's racial community.

We Believe: In order for transracial adoptees to form, develop, and mature healthy same-race identities, they must be afforded ongoing and continuous opportunities to encounter, engage, and immerse themselves in communities that share their racial and ethnic background.

We Believe: Race matters. We encourage transracial families to engage in productive, meaningful, necessary, and even uncomfortable conversation around race. It has been our experience that avoiding these conversations is never in the family's best interest.

We Believe: By creating transracial families you have made a deliberate choice to expose your family to conflicting and diverse experiences that are not faced by same race families. In so much as these experiences create discomfort, the burden of bearing it rests primarily with the adoptive parents.

We Believe: When it comes to talking about race, culture, and privilege in America, the transracial adoptee is in a powerful and unique position. Having lived on at least two sides of the many-sided racial divide, they are able to describe its contours more accurately than most anyone.

We Believe: White privilege is real and that, by virtue of adoption, transracial adoptees are afforded certain privileges and protections not afforded to children of color raised in homes of color.

We Believe: These privileges and protections have a limited shelf life. Therefore, it is critical that transracially adopted children be prepared for and supported in the transition from the privileged and protective walls of white parentage into a world for which these privileges and protections have most likely ill prepared them.

Coaching Philosophy

As a coach I hold fast to the belief that when people know better and differently, they can do better and differently. As such, my goal is to partner with prospective and adoptive parents in identifying, understanding, and addressing the inherent challenges and obstacles that come with creating and growing healthy and happy transracial families.

To do this effectively, it is important that both coach and parent participate honestly and authentically. In order to facilitate this, I ask involved parties to commit to the principle of saying what needs to be said in the most receivable way possible, while still getting their points across. I also ask involved parties to receive that which is being said as if it were coming from a place void of malice, a place where transracially adopted children are supported and encouraged to see themselves for what they truly are—distinctively beautiful.

One-On-One Coaching

For those interested in one-on-one coaching. We are pleased to offer the following options:

Option #1 Pre-coaching questionnaire and review plus 55 minute Video Chat/Phone Call.

Option #2 All the above, plus a post-session report, as well as supplemental materials and exercises.

Possible Coaching Topics

Below are some suggested topics. If you're interested in something else, send me an e-mail, and I'll let you know if I'm qualified to coach on it.

- Fostering Transracial Identities in Non-Diverse Communities
- Talking to Children about Race/Racism
- Importance of Pre-Adoption Cultural Competency/Tips and Strategies for Developing it
- Transracial Identity Formation, Development, Maturation 101
- Transracial Identity/Strategic Planning: Childhood
- Transracial Identity/Strategic Planning: Adolescent
- Transracial Identity/Strategic Planning: Young Adult
- Multi-Identity/Construction/Development
- Substance Abuse, Eating Disorders, Depression, and the Transracial Adoptee
- Being Black and Male in America: Dangerous Until Proven Otherwise
- White Privilege/Black Burdens
- Mirror, Mirror: the Importance of Seeing One's Reflection
- Impact of Honorary White Privileges and Protections on Transracial Adoptees
- How to Foster Same Race Engagement
- Whiteness and Blackness: What Are They and Why Is It Important
- Tips and Strategies for Navigating Schools and Other Social Environments
- Tips and Strategies for Interacting with Law Enforcement and Other Authorities
- Tips and Strategies for Advocating/Intervening on Your Child's Behalf
- Tips and Strategies for Dispensing Sensitive Birth Story Information
- Tips and Strategies for Dealing with Racist Family, Teachers, etc.
- Parenting LGBT Transracial Adoptees/LGBT Parents
- Raising Transracial Adoptees

- Tips and Strategies for Addressing Transracial Family Specific Uncomfortable Situations
- Discharge Planning: Preparing Your Child for Life Beyond the Privileged and Protective Walls of White Parentage

Distance Learning Courses

Introduction to Identity

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing parents who adopt transracially is that of shepherding their child through the complex minefield of racial identity formation, development, and maturation -- a task all the more difficult for parents unfamiliar with identity development in general and its impact on both them and their children.

This exciting and informative workshop provides an overview of identity, with an emphasis on ways in which the adoptive parents' identities and identity development impacts that of their transracially adopted children, including an examination of whiteness* and its role in advancing, protecting, and valuing white people and spaces above others, as well as the extra burdens this places on transracial adoptees.

*"Whiteness' is an ideological fiction naming those properties supposedly unique to 'white people,' properties used to claim that they are a 'superior race' and the 'norm' by which others are judged... 'Whiteness' is also—or above all else—a legal fiction determining the distribution of wealth, power, human rights, and citizenship among bodies denominated by this fiction." -- Dr. Gregory Jay, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Takeaways

During this course you will learn about:

- Self, social, and multiple identities
- The stages of adolescent identity development
- How parental identity impacts the transracial adoptee
- Coming of age non-white, in spaces where white is the default identity
- How unspoken traits, biases, beliefs, and assumptions help shape our identity
- The impact of honorary white privileges and protections on transracial adoptees
- How white skin preference operates systematically, structurally, and sometimes unconsciously as a dominant force in America

Syllabus

This six lesson* experiential learning course consists of a combination of narratives, essays, exercises, assessments, and a 55-minute video/telephonic conference. The course is designed to approach the topics through multiple lenses, while drawing most heavily from the experiences, narratives, and scholarship of adult transracial adoptees.

Process

Within 24 hours of your purchase you will receive an Intake Self-Assessment Questionnaire. Once completed and returned, your first lesson will be sent. Each additional lesson will be sent out upon notification of completion of the prior lesson. The final lesson will be the video/telephonic conference. While not a requirement, it is suggested students aim to complete courses within 12 weeks. If you later decide to take additional courses, any duplicative lessons and/or takeaways contained in this or previous courses will be swapped out in favor of new topic-specific materials.

Introduction to Transracial Identity

“A major, ongoing task for parents who adopt transracially is supporting their child as they undertake the task of same-race identity development. This task may be all the more difficult in a country where white people rarely give much thought or weight to identity development; for, in America, white skin is seen as the default racial identity, and thereby the “norm” by which others races are judged.

This critical workshop seeks to educate adoptive parents on the importance of their child developing a healthy transracial identity. The workshop will provide insight into identifying and addressing those inherent obstacles that accompany one’s transracial identity development.

Newly developed transracial identity development models -- as well as a series of narratives, lessons, exercises, and video conferences -- will help participants gain sets of step-by-step tools to support the development of an in-depth, ongoing, and multi-level transracial identity. Application of these tools will extend beyond adolescence to the challenges so many transracial adoptees experience as they transition out of the privileged and protective walls of white parentage and into a world for which these privileges and protections have most likely ill prepared them.

Takeaways

During this course you will learn about:

- Various models of racial and ethnic identity development
- How to foster identity development in less than diverse communities
- Overcoming barriers to healthy transracial identity development
- How growing up in white spaces impacts the adoptee’s same-race identity
- Best practices for white parents raising children of a different racial identity
- The role faith and houses of worship can play in same-race identity formation
- Tips and strategies in engaging your child in ongoing, multi-level same-race engagement

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Raising Black Boys to Become Black Men

When it comes to the police, many white people have the “If you’re not doing anything wrong, you’ve got nothing to worry about,” attitude. While true for most white people, this couldn’t be further from the truth for black people when it comes to police interactions. Thus, consider the problems with applying this axiom to young black men raised within the privileged and protective walls of white parentage. On one hand, they have the skin color America often sees as dangerous and criminal-minded; on the other hand, they have the nature, being, and knowing of a white person. Taken together, these can be a lethal combination.

This important workshop will explore the significant challenges associated with white parents raising black boys in a world where black skin alone is often seen as sufficient probable cause. It will also provide tips and strategies on engaging your sons in continuous and ongoing, albeit uncomfortable, conversations around what it means to be both black and male in America. Participants will also have the opportunity to develop potentially lifesaving prevention and engagement plans regarding police encounters.

Takeaways

During this course you will learn about:

- Interacting with law enforcement and other authorities
- Navigating schools and other social environments
- The black male’s premature transition into adulthood
- The importance of adult black male mentorship and when and how to seek it out
- Talking to children and adolescents about race/racism/policing
- The differences between white parents raising black boys and black parents raising black boys
- Preparing your sons for life outside the privileged and protective walls of white parentage

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Introduction to Prospective Adoptive Parenting

Parenting is hard work; parenting a child of another race, culture, or ethnicity is even harder. This course seeks to equip prospective adoptive parents with information, tools, and suggestions. Course work will also include pre-adoption self, family, and environmental assessments. The course aims to prepare prospective parents to better understand and appreciate all that comes with not only adopting but also raising a transracial child. As a result, prospective adoptive parents can make a more informed decision as to whether transracial adoption is right for them and, more importantly, whether they, their family, and their environment the right fit for a child of a different race.

Takeaways

During this course you will learn about:

- Multiple adoption readiness assessments
- The importance of seeing color and the limitations of love
- The importance of, and how to obtain, pre-existing cultural competency
- Creating and growing healthy and happy transracial families
- Navigating schools, family, and other social environments
- Coming of age non-white, in spaces where white is the default identity
- The impact of honorary white privileges and protections on transracial adoptees
- Dealing with diverse and conflicting experiences not faced by same race families
- How white skin preference operates systematically, structurally, and sometimes unconsciously as a dominant force in America

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Introduction to Newly Adoptive Parenting

Our newly adoptive parents course explores and addresses many of the unique obstacles and opportunities associated with parenting a child of another race, culture, or ethnicity. This course includes matters often overlooked by adoption agency led workshops, as well as matters which only arise once the transracial family is intact. This course will also provide participants with age appropriate insight, suggestions, and tools for developing healthy same-race identities in young children, as well as transition-specific tools and suggestions for those adopting older children.

Takeaways

During this course you will learn about:

- Multiple adoption readiness assessments
- The importance of seeing color and the limitations of love
- The importance of, and how to obtain, cultural competency
- Creating and growing healthy and happy transracial families
- Navigating schools, family, and other social environments
- Coming of age non-white in spaces where white is the default identity
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Biography

Chad Goller-Sojourner is an adult transracial adoptee, educator, coach, and author of the forthcoming book “From Lutefisk and Lefse to Cornbread and Collards: Narratives, Essays, and Interactive Exercises in Transracial Adoption.” His personal and professional insights on transracial families have been featured by various media, including Time Magazine and NPR’s Weekend Edition, where his story “Growing Up ‘White,’ Transracial Adoptee Learned to Be Black” was selected as the 2014 Pick of the Year. Also an educator, Chad’s work on multi- and transracial identity development has resulted in numerous community and academic appointments, including Visiting Professorships at both Ohio and Radford Universities.

As a writer/performer, Chad is the creator of two highly acclaimed solo shows. “Sitting in Circles with Rich White Girls: Memoirs of a Bulimic Black Boy” is the groundbreaking and crushingly honest story of a bulimic, black boy raised by white parents and struggling to find beauty, acceptance, and safe space in an all-white world. “Riding in Cars with Black People & Other Newly Dangerous Acts: A Memoir in Vanishing Whiteness” is the story of what happens when a transracial adoptee “ages out” of honorary white and suburban privilege and into a world where men with black skin are deemed dangerous until proven otherwise.

A frequent contributor to several online transracial adoption communities, Chad continues to advise adoptive parents on the ins and outs of creating healthy and happy transracial families, ones where even the most conflicting of experiences can be reclaimed, transformed, and accepted for what they are: the building blocks of our unique identities.