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for Adoptive Families



Why we talk about race David B. G., Adoptive Parent

At 13 and 14, our boys love soccer, video games, and unlimited Wi-Fi. Fairly typical. And we're a fairly typical adoptive family. Josh joined our family through domestic infant adoption, and we have an open relationship with his birth mother. Ben was a year old when he joined our family through intercountry adoption.

But there's one way our family may not be typical: Josh is Hispanic. Ben is Black. My wife, Ali, and I are white.

For now, our community largely experiences our kids as "Ali and David's boys." But I watch the news, and I see the headlines. I know the white spaces our family inhabits won't always embrace our Black and brown boys as part of their community.

The day will come when someone clutches their purse tighter when they walk by, and someone will want to know what they're up to in our neighborhood. Sooner than we care to imagine, the world will perceive our growing boys through the lens of race — as a potential threat.

As a white parent, that makes me sad, angry, and afraid for my children.

Of course, this reality is well-known to most people of color; but I didn't understand it until children of color were part of my family.

Ali and I have been intentional about cultivating friendships with people of color, especially Black families in our church. But as much as we've learned, we realize we'll never truly "get it." And that's the sobering reality of whiteness — I will never know what it is to experience the world as a person of color, and I resisted that truth for a long time.

Racism isn't always overt prejudice, thinking consciously racist thoughts. It's more often about how people are systemically treated differently. I can't put myself in the shoes of my friend who was stopped by police five times this month because he's Black. To even say, "because he's Black" is a discomfort I'd rather avoid. But I acknowledge the truth of my friend's experience, even if it's not my experience.

I know our kids are treated differently now because their parents are white. At school, at church, and in other familiar places, everyone knows we come as a package: Ben and Josh are David and

Ali's kids. Like a talisman, our privilege rubs off on them. That won't always be the case, and everyone in our family needs to be prepared for that.

Listening to and learning from those who "get it" and being present with them in their pain is what will prepare me as a parent to stay present with my kids in their painful moments. If I choose not to see color or acknowledge racial disparities when they take place, when something happens with my sons, my color-blind response will minimize, diminish, or dehumanize them rather than validate who they are and the truth of their experience.

Our kids are going to hear things at school, and they're going to talk about racialized events with their friends. These conversations influence how they see the world and their place in it. That's why Ali and I read, talk, notice, question, and advocate. In our home, we talk about race like we talk about the weather. We're teaching our sons to confidently enter hard conversations about race and how, with grace, they can shape them.

"Our similarities bring us to common ground;
our differences allow us to be fascinated by each other." —*Tom Robbins*

Did You Know?

Medical Subsidy Program Updates

April 1, 2021, updates were activated to the Medical Subsidy Policy, AAM640. Policy changes were made based on needs of families that work with the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Office and suggestions from community partners. Changes include increased funding for medical/dental needs not covered by insurance, increased flexibility with tutoring and camp funds to best meet children's needs, and expansion to mental health funding, including adding respite funds to promote community treatment options. Contact your assigned worker in the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Office for information on services that support your family and the process to receive funding.

For contact information, visit Michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-AdoptionSubsidy-Contacts_253834_7.pdf



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Check out postadoptionrc.org for past editions of our newsletter, events, helpful articles, and more information about us and services we offer.

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2
Traverse City, MI 49686
231-995-0870

bethany.org/traverscity
parctc@bethany.org

facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services
175 W Apple Ave
Muskegon, MI 49440
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facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
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Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



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postadoptionrc.org

Other suggested websites: adoptivefamilies.com adoptioninstitute.org