

# Top 10 Pieces of Advice for White Parents Adopting Transracially

From Dr. Joy Hoffman - Director of the Cultural Center, Whittier College

**Before adopting, educate yourself on racial dynamics in the U.S.** - your child WILL experience racism and how you respond will be pivotal to how they perceive you as a support person or just another White person who chooses to believe race is no longer an issue.

**Do NOT raise your child to be color blind.** Color is beautiful. When you say, “I don’t see color,” you are saying you don’t see your beautiful child. Talk about race. Do not make race a taboo topic; that sends the message to your child that race/color is bad, and therefore there must be something wrong with them.

**Do not let the first person to show support be a peer or teacher.** Your child should be getting emotional and psychological support at home. When your child comes home crying and tells you that a kid teased him/her about their skin color, facial features, hair texture, etc. PLEASE DO NOT respond with, “Just ignore them” or “It’s okay, Jesus loves you.” Call it what it is. VALIDATE your child’s experience. It’s called racism and it is unacceptable. Then discuss appropriate ways to respond to ignorant people.

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**Encourage your child to explore their identity.** My research showed that ethnic/racial, white, and adoptee identity are all salient qualities for transracial adoptees. This means that (Korean adoptees as an example), many transracial KAAs identify with being a racial and ethnic being, may “feel white,” and have a strong connection to being adopted. Transracial adoptees experience life in a unique way because they are being raised by families and in communities that do not look like them. This is not a bad thing, but you must be open to the uniqueness of their experience and validate their feelings in times of identity crisis.

**If they decide to seek out their birth parents, do not make this about you.** Guilt-tripping a child for wanting answers is sick and wrong, and that’s a reflection of your own insecurities. As a parent, you should WANT your child to be healthy and whole.

**Introduce them (if they are open) to their culture of origin so they have an appreciation of and connection to their heritage.** My research showed that adoptees felt they were “missing” something because they could not speak their language of origin and/or knew nothing or little about Korean culture. They didn’t feel Korean or Asian enough around other Koreans and Asians, and they weren’t white, either. “Missing pieces” also included lack of medical records or an incomplete story regarding their adoption. Adoptees live in “the in-between.” If your child is not interested in finding answers, fine, but at least offer the opportunities. Make it their decision. Empower them.

**Connect them to other adoptees.** Shared experiences are powerful.

**Just be open.** Open to dialogue. open to tough conversations, open to their exploration. The best gift you can give is support. Again, DO NOT make this about you. That is a reflection of your own insecurities.

**Your children are NOT white.** They may have a strong connections to white culture, but they do not benefit from white privilege. The sooner you accept them as racial beings and understand how your racial experiences are different because you are not brown, the more supportive you can be.

**If you do not believe in white privilege, you should not be adopting a non-white child.** If you are willing to pour hours into parenting books, you should be open to learning about how your child’s life experiences will differ from yours.

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