

Q&A with Dale and Raquel

Responding to Insensitive Comments Regarding Transracial and Transcultural Adoptions

We've discussed some of the insensitive comments adoptive parents hear from other people about families formed by adoption. These comments can be even more common and feel even more negative when the families include transracial or transcultural adoptions. Confronting racist comments and helping children form a positive racial identity are therefore very important to these families.

1. Teach your children about racism. Point it out when you see it. Ignoring it or minimizing it can lead a child to think they are the cause of the behavior or that you think they are.

2. Increase your self awareness by:

- realizing that your cultural and racial backgrounds influence your thoughts, actions and words,
- recognizing your own prejudices and make an effort to change them
- acknowledging that others may see your family as different
- acknowledging that your children may be treated unfairly because of racism.

3. The following strategies can help your children form a positive racial or cultural identity:

- Look at the world around you. As much as you can, try to include people of your child's race or culture in your life. Consider this in choosing: doctors and other professionals; schools or extracurricular activities; shopping locations; vacations or summer camps.
- Discuss the history of your child's race early on – including both the positives and negatives. They should hear about this from you and from people of their own racial background.
- Maintain a sense of the family unity through family rituals. These rituals can support your family member's similarities while acknowledging their differences.

Again, using honesty, combined with compassion and empathy, would be the approach to take when discussing your child's adoption with them. Your family may be look "different," but different does not mean better and it does not mean worse. It just means different.