

The Constellation



**Spring 2010
Quarterly Magazine**



Letter From the President
Lani Faith

Honoring our Histories
Celebrating our Lives



Have you ever signed up for an early morning breakfast meeting/seminar that “in the moment” sounded great but weeks later when the day finally arrives all you can think about is how much earlier you have to get up and all the work on your desk that you really should be doing instead? I had one of those mornings today.

Shortly after I arrived and got my cold coffee, dry bran muffin and sat down, the speaker began. His first words were... “What’s going well in your life?” Take a few minutes to think about it and then share with the folks at your table. Are you kidding me? All I can think about are the stressful situations at work that need to be resolved later today and how I really wished I had that extra 45 minutes back for more sleep. My mind is frozen.

Person one shares, person two, three, and then it’s my turn. I didn’t have a clue but all of a sudden I start talking about a great not-for-profit that I’m a part of called Adoption Mosaic. How I’ve recently been selected to serve as Board President and as a part of my board responsibilities I also serve on the marketing committee which had met the night before. I discovered we are now on Facebook (with new friends all over the world) & Twitter; we’re planning a Mother’s Day Run at Mt. Tabor Park with the hope of 100 participants; we’re adding new workshops like African-American Hair Care, a birthmother panel, and a new Adult Adoptee Support Group modeled after our kids groups. We are committed to serve and provide resources to everyone in the adoption constellation. I’m really proud of the opportunities we are finding to make a difference in the bigger story of the adoption world and I get to meet some really talented people who are really interesting.

While I believed every word I said, I’ll admit I was mostly relieved to have found something to say in that frozen moment. Two seconds before it was my turn, I was still a blank, not awake enough to be an articulate board member, but here’s the cool part: An hour later when the seminar was over three out of the five strangers at my table asked me to tell them more about “that not-for-profit” I mentioned earlier. And did we have a website where they could get more information about what we do?

I call these “Ambassador Moments,” and we’ve been talking a lot about them in our board meetings this past year. They are everyday opportunities to tell the Adoption Mosaic story. We take our role as ambassadors pretty seriously - what it means to us, why we’re involved and why we’re excited about it. Our stories matter. Your stories matter. I encourage you to look for those ambassador moments in your own life. Among us, we’ve got lots of stories to tell. We won’t always do it perfectly. Half the time we may stumble into something that surprises us when it touches others.

There are even more new things starting at Adoption Mosaic than those I’ve mentioned already. Join me in welcoming our newest board member, Finance Committee member Kerwin Carambot. And keep reading to learn about our LGBTQ committee, and “We Can Do Better,” a discussion series based upon the *Adopted* film trainings, and so much more! I’m looking forward to this season of growth and new opportunity at Adoption Mosaic. Thank you for partnering with us.

Lani Faith

Lani is currently the Board President and a member of the Marketing committee for Adoption Mosaic. She is also the Director of Marketing and College Relations at Warner Pacific College in Portland, OR. As an adoptee herself, Lani has worked hard to make meaning of her own adoption experience while also showing deep respect for others’ adoption experiences.

Check out our blog at
www.blog.adoptionmosaic.org
Adoption Mosaic is now on
Twitter!
<http://twitter.com/AdoptionMosaic>

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Adoption Mosaic's Upcoming LGBTQ Programming



Many don't know that Adoption Mosaic has had a dynamic Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgendered and Questioning programming sub-committee (chaired by board member Michael McGroarty) quietly working on new and innovative programming that serves LGBTQ adoptive parents. They are working on a LGBTQ parent workshop with hopes to be presented at the November 2010 Shoulder to Shoulder Adoption Conference and Adoption Fair. The focus will be on the specific needs of LGBTQ parents, available support services, and LGBTQ-friendly agencies. A telephone (hotline) mentoring program is also in the works, due to launch this June. Through this hotline, people will have advice and support available to them at the

push of a button. Adoption Mosaic is also looking forward to being a presence at the upcoming Portland Pride Parade that takes place on Father's Day, June 20th. Come join our walk in the parade or drop by our booth to say hi!

In an effort to learn more about what agency resources are available to LGBTQ parents, LGBTQ sub-committee member, Cliff Leonardi, presented a brief survey at a recent COAA meeting (Coalition of Adoption Agencies) where about 15 different agencies were represented. The goal was not to pass judgment or even present a position, but rather to "observe and report." The questions the survey focused on were whether the agencies are LGBTQ-affirming agencies, what support to LGBTQ families exists in the community, and whether the agencies market to LGBTQ parents. The answers to the survey were mixed. Several agencies serve LGBTQ clients, however, don't directly advertise to them, others did not provide any services to LGBTQ families, and approximately half openly welcomed LGBTQ clients.



Adoption Mosaic ~ At a Glance

Adoption Mosaic regularly adds new dates to our calendar, check adoptionmosaic.org for the most recent schedule

March

March 9 ~ Movie Group – Open to the community (Movie: *I Am Sam*)
March 13 & 14 ~ Adoption Readiness
March 13 ~ Transracial Parenting – (Part C)
March 13 ~ Transracial Adult Adoptee Panel
March 26 & 27 ~ Transracial Parenting Workshop in Seattle, WA
March 28th ~ African American Hair Care Workshop Begins (April 11 & 25)

April

April 3 ~ Youth Activity Group – Parent Orientation
April 5 ~ Youth Activity Group – 6-week series begins (Grades 1 – 6)
April 5 ~ Common Threads - Adult Adoptee Group – 6-week series begins
April 17 ~ Transracial Parenting – (Part A)
April 24 ~ Birthmother Panel

May

May 1 ~ What & When: How to Talk With Your Child About Adoption
May 9 ~ Run Mama Run! 2nd Annual Mothers' Day Walk/Run
May 11 ~ Movie Group – Adult Adoptee Only (Movie: *Adopted*)
May 15 & 16 ~ Adoption Readiness
May 22 ~ Transracial Parenting - (Part B)

June

June 5 ~ Transracial Parenting - (Part C)
June 5 ~ Transracial Adult Adoptee Panel

Run Mama Run

On Mother's Day, Adoption Mosaic is holding our second annual Mother's Day Walk and Run at Mt. Tabor park to honor all our mothers.



In the spring of 2009, a group of local mothers tried to register for their longstanding Mother's Day tradition, a half marathon in another city, only to find the run had sold out in less than 12 hours! At the suggestion of one of their husbands, these women talked to friends, who talked to other friends and before we knew it, Run Mama Run was born. The 2nd annual Run Mama Run, a celebration of mothers and motherhood is planned for **Sunday, May 9, 2010** at Portland's Mt Tabor Park. Run Mama Run raises funds to benefit Adoption Mosaic. In addition to the mothers' run (you don't have to run/walk to join in the fun) we will have a **Kids' Fun Run** - a 1/4 mile run for the kids - tons of kids' activities and crafts; coffee/tea, pastries and fruit will be served, and all registrants will receive a Run Mama Run Tee-shirt. The Kids' Fun Run begins at 9:30 and the mamas will run at 10:00. Registration is \$45.00. Be sure to register on our website before April 23rd. See you there!



Adoption Dialogue: Adoption Language

*Through conversation we are able to learn from one another.
Through dialogue our connections become deeper and our relationships richer*

Our Adoption Dialogues are moderated conversations between different members of the adoption constellation on a variety of different subjects. They are not scripted. They are not limited. Participants are free to take the conversation wherever they choose. The result is a rich discussion that you, the reader, are also able to experience. Contact tara@adoptionmosaic.org if interested in participating.

Many people outside of, and within, the adoption community don't realize there is a specific "language of adoption." What do we mean when we talk about "adoption language?" What do we mean when we refer to "positive, or respectful, adoption language?"

Kelly: Basically, we're referring to terms and ways of speaking that define and describe the experience of adoption. Positive or respectful language is the thoughtful use of words--situating terms with an awareness of differing experiences.

Shelise: I think that adoption requires a narrative outside the status quo, as to how families are made. Also, since there is usually a lot of emotions involved in the adoption process, how we talk about it can become very tricky.

Kelly: Absolutely, Shelise. Adoption requires that we talk about families in ways that we may not have familiarity or practice with. And I agree that the emotions involved make this process challenging.

Shelise: Since it is an experience that hasn't exactly been "normalized" in society, it is important to have words to describe choices and feelings to those outside and inside the community of adoption. I think we have to talk about positive or respectful language, because there are a lot of hurtful ways ignorance can influence how one talks about adoption.

Kelly: True. Ignorance and lack of exposure do influence that.

Shelise: For example statements like: "You were unwanted," "You can't have kids of your 'own'" or "Who are your 'real' parents?"

Kelly: Mm-hmm, there's a lot of language around ownership.

Shelise: I think it is interesting when ownership becomes important to adoptive and birth families.

Shelise Gieske, is a Korean adoptee with an undergraduate degree in communication and is interested in the way society shapes the adoptee experience through language. She was raised on a farm in southern Minnesota with three siblings who were not adopted. Shelise is excited to work with all members of the adoption constellation to create a safe and open learning environment.

Kelly Jeske, MS, is a mama, writer, reader and thinker. She has a graduate degree in sociology with her thesis research focused on heteronormativity and resulting health care disparities. Kelly is mama to one child, adopted transracially through a domestic open adoption.

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New At Adoption Mosaic

There are so many incredible new things happening at Adoption Mosaic this spring and summer. Two new programs that deserve to be highlighted are our birth mother panel discussion and Common Threads: Adult Adoptee Group.

Birth Mother Panel - Adoption begins with the birth mother's story, yet often her voice goes unheard. Even in open adoption, the intimate experience of the birth mother may be unspoken. This is an opportunity to hear the stories of 5 local birth mothers and the circumstances surrounding the relinquishment of their children. Though often difficult to hear, the birth mother experience is an integral part in gaining better understanding of the adoption experience and the impact it can have on all members of the adoption constellation.

Saturday April 24th, from 9-11 am, OHSU

Common Threads: Adult Adoptee Group – Connect. Support. Create. Meet and connect with other adoptees in a fun and supportive environment! Over the course of this exciting six-week program we'll discover ways to tell our stories through the creative media of your choice (writing, art, music, etc.), share our common threads & experience a sense of community. Explore how our identities can change over time and much, much more.

Open to adult adoptees age 18+, 6 consecutive Mondays, April 5th through May 10th, SE Portland

Other exciting happenings include Executive Director **Astrid Dabbeni's invitation to join the board of NACAC** (North American Council on Adoptable Children). NACAC's mission is to promote and support permanent families for children and youth in the U. S. and Canada who have been in care – especially those in foster care and those with special needs. Astrid is honored to serve on their board.

We are also looking forward to launching our **LGBTQ Hotline** (see page 2) this summer, along with our **"We Can Do Better Series,"** where we will watch sections of *Adopted* documentary series, "We Can Do Better," followed by a facilitated discussion. Visit our website adoptionmosaic.org for updated information on all our new programming.

(Language Dialogue continued from page 3)

Kelly: In part, I think it's about how children are situated in our culture, but it's also about the need for reassurance, about belonging and security.

Shelise: I agree. There are also a lot of class issues going on. And I think one of the reasons we need adoption language spelled out and defined is because there is a lot of fantasy surrounding adoption and language perpetuates it.

Kelly: I agree.

Shelise: For example the idea of who and what is an orphan. Technically, orphans have no living parents, but many contemporary orphans do not qualify for this definition. Currently, orphans are synonymous with abandoned or relinquished. Even if we are conscious that a child's parents are living, we often talk about them like they are not.

Kelly: Disempowering language like "gave up" and "couldn't keep" constructs a picture of first/birth parents as helpless and victimized, whereas often adoptive parents are described as "choosing" children and constructing "forever families." There's a duality there that divides parents into separate constituents with the child put in between.

Then we ask adoptees to participate in the story by figuring out who their "real" parents are--as a society, we aren't living out many models that are more complex than this.

Shelise: Agreed. Through language, we have defined the roles for birth parents and adoptive parents. Who is the bad guy and who is good.

Kelly: Yes, Shelise, wow. It's so true--there is a constant erasure of birth families. I hadn't thought about this notion of orphans in terms of adoptees: Who is bad, who is good and without the possibility that there's more than that...

Read the rest of this dialogue and the following dialogue on Fantasy and Adoption at:
<http://www.adoptionmosaic.org/?p=971>

Adoption Mosaic Movie Review

The Baby Dance PG (1998) Review by Livia Montana



Starring: Laura Dern, Stockard Channing, Peter Riegert, Richard Lineback

Wanda and Al LeFauveare are a low-income couple living in a trailer in Louisiana. They have four children and Wanda is pregnant with their fifth. Given that they don't feel they can afford to parent another child, Wanda answers a newspaper ad placed by a wealthy Jewish couple, who have struggled with infertility, and are now searching for a child to adopt. Preliminary agreements are made, and Rachel and Richard fly from their home in Los Angeles to meet Wanda and Al. The couples deal with legalities, fears, cultural and class barriers, and each of their own expectations.

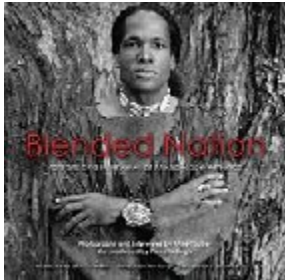
"through the viewing of mainstream movies the adoption experience is shared and normalized"

Come join us for a movie and facilitated discussion at Adoption Mosaic's community and adoptee Movie Nights. Visit www.adoptionmosaic.org for more information, and be sure to drop by our blog to continue the discussion! <http://blog.adoptionmosaic.org>

Adoption Mosaic Book Review

Blended Nation: Portraits and Interviews of Mixed-Race America by Mike Tauber and Pamela Singh

Review by Catherine Maryse Anderson



Blended Nation: Portraits and Interviews of Mixed-Race America is a collective photographic and transcribed exploration of what it means to identify as mixed race in twenty-first century America.

I was pulled in from the cover, and felt instantly as if I just arrived at a family reunion with hundreds of kindred voices that all welcomed me in, even when what they had to say was not easy to hear. Take for example the words of Timothy Meril. Adopted, Puerto Rican, and Iranian, and in middle school, his portrait exudes self assurances and self doubt simultaneously. The sepia tones reflect his skin and the bark of the tree-that I trust and hope he will one day be as strong as -and provide a lush container for his honesty; "I'm not black and I'm not white and I just try to fit in... My parents and family love me, but they don't understand all the issues I deal with." I see our family over and over in the pages of this hefty, smooth, and visually stunning event. Interracial families, mixed race marriages, adoption, one part this and four parts that, and so many photos of radiant gorgeous people with curly black hair. Our family is the norm over and over again.

In the October 09 issue of *Adoptive Families* magazine, there was a story by a now grown woman, Deborah Jiang Stein, who used to pour over the photos in the *National Geographic* magazine every month as a child, desperate to find a picture of someone who looked like her. Her adoptive parents did not at the time have the background information necessary to help her discover what her ethnicity was (part Greek, Taiwanese-American, Latina and more). Her essay came to mind as I looked in the eyes of the confident LaTanya Spann who is black, white and Asian. LaTanya talks about her choice in college of joining either the Asian, white or black sorority, and her decision to join a Latina-founded multi-cultural sorority instead. The difference in options for her, and Ms. Stein are epic. The book offers this perspective, and all of the possibility that shift engendered by the younger generation presents. At the same time, you are invited in, to the work of the parents that came before them, and the struggles of the peers that have not found their way to her flushed out decision.

I see this book as a tool for my sons, Sammy (African-American), Marcel (mixed race African-American and Caucasian), and I to have many necessary conversations in the future. When Eddie, our Haitian superhero former nanny and now weekly dinner guest rock star was here the other night she said, having Marcel as a brother is going to provide opportunities for Sammy that he wouldn't necessary have otherwise. And, having Sammy as a brother will do the same for Marcel. This book offers me a little crystal ball moment into that map she sees ahead of them. The stories in the book, and the dare-you-to-turn-that-page-until-you-see-my-soul photos included should be the anchor text for all families who aim to parent children of any background fully in this century. It's like having extended family sitting on the couch who just showed up when you were at a loss for words and need their help to explain what it means to be human, today.

In The Spotlight

Adoption Readiness Workshop

Adoption Readiness By Mina Bacigalupi



Mina Bacigalupi is a pediatric nurse at Doernbecher Children's Hospital. She has worked and volunteered in adoption for the past 14 years. She was one of the founders of Adoption Mosaic. She and her husband, Jay, adopted a daughter from China in 1996 and a son born in Portland in 1997.

Several years ago, my school-aged daughter asked me, "Why do you have to teach parents about adoption?" It made me pause to think. Most of adoptive parenting is the same as parenting any other child. Yet there are some distinct differences. Adoption Mosaic's Adoption Readiness class addresses those differences and more, with a goal of preparing parents for the lifelong adventure of being an adoptive parent.

Only in recent years has it been widely recognized that some degree of preparation for adoptive parents is necessary. Often this preparation has been about the adoption process itself, a little about adoption language, the legalities, and maybe some information about travel or the culture. Now the State of Oregon and the Hague Convention Treaty mandate minimum educational requirements for adoptive parents. Adoption Readiness meets and exceeds these requirements.

"This class addresses tough issues. For all members of the adoption constellation, adoption is a process of happiness and pain, gain and loss. Every child and every family is different, and it is impossible to predict how each will react in a situation. Addressing the hardest and most difficult issues helps parents to be prepared for the toughest times."

The Adoption Readiness class covers the Seven Core Issues in Adoption - which are experienced in varying degrees by all members of the adoption constellation. We discuss attachment and bonding - recognizing it as a long, reciprocal process. Thoughts and information about transracial adoption are introduced, and parents learn about becoming a conspicuous family and the importance of understanding racial matters. These important issues are covered and much more.

Adoption Mosaic's class is unique among preparatory classes. Today

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Some Frequently Asked Questions

What types of adoption does the Adoption Readiness Class prepare us for?

The Adoption Readiness class is designed to prepare parents for both general and common issues of all types of adoption whether a family is built through private, international, domestic, open, confidential, agency or attorney assisted adoption.

Is there anything this class does not cover? The class does not cover information about the adoption process, country-specific or child-specific information, legal requirements, and paperwork or immigration requirements. For information or questions about these issues, parents are referred to their attorney or agency.

Why should I take this class instead of an online course? There are many reasons an in-person class is preferred over an online course. Adoption Mosaic believes that the challenges and joys of adoptive parenting are a life-long adventure. Adoptive parents have enjoyed engaging in dialogs with others and this enhances their understanding and learning. The ability to ask questions and discuss issues in a confidential environment is invaluable. This class connects parents to the adoption community and all the resources that Adoption Mosaic offers. This class is also very personal, as Mina and Nina share their life experiences as members of the adoption constellation. You will also be able to meet and network with other adoptive parents.

Nina Yates is a Marriage and Family Therapist, She specializes in providing "attachment readiness" support for adoptive parents who wish to nurture resilience and intimacy in their families. She also helps families navigating open adoptions, as well as adult adoptees and birth parents exploring and experiencing adoption search and reunion. Nina is adopted and has been in reunion with her birth family for almost twenty years.



www.PortlandAdoptionCounseling.com

From our participants:

"Thoroughly enjoyed the course. Your commitment to cover difficult issues from attachment to dealing with infertility is extremely comforting."

"The small class format was wonderful!!! I felt comfortable in being open and asking a lot of questions."



Ask Astrid

Quarterly, we feature your questions answered by Astrid Dabbeni. Please submit your questions to tara@adoptionmosaic.org with "ask astrid" in the subject line

Dear Astrid,

I am an adult adoptee who was adopted from overseas when I was 4 years old. I have recently found my birth family and am trying to plan a trip back to my birth country. I have never been back, I don't speak the language and know no one there. In planning for my trip I am trying to decide how long I should stay. I don't want to stay too long, but then again, don't want to make the trip too short. Any advice would be appreciated!

Thank you, Pilar

Dear Pilar,

Thank you for your questions! Adoptive parents often ask me questions about birthparent contact, "homeland" tours/ visits, when is the perfect age to return with their son/daughter, should they visit the "finding site"...and so on. Your question is the first that we have received from an adult adoptee who is trying to make the best decision for themselves as an adult. Similar to the question "when is the perfect age to return", I don't believe there is a perfect answer to your question as to how long you should stay. There are SO MANY factors to take into consideration when deciding how long your first visit will be. Here are some questions you might ask yourself to help bring you to a timeline that feels right for your first trip.

1. Is this trip to only meet your birth family? Or is it also to visit and tour your birth country?
2. How expensive will it be for you to stay in a hotel? I strongly encourage you to NOT stay with your birth family even if they offer. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, however, I have met adoptees who have regretted accepting the offer (often times due to the fear of hurting feelings). Regardless of how "successful" the reunion is, everyone will need some emotional downtime.
3. What will the cost of a translator be? Who is going to be your translator? A total stranger? Someone who understands the complexities of adoption?
4. Remember you don't have to do everything this one time.

You might want to make a list of the top 5 things that you feel are the most important and then weigh the pros and cons. Perhaps the formula sounds complex but I believe your taking the time now (before making your decision) will save you a lot of emotional energy in the future.

(Adoption Readiness continued from page 6)

many parents are receiving their mandated education online, by a CD course, reading books and writing a book report, or completing a workbook. While these methods can cover the mandated information, they offer little time to reflect. The Adoption Readiness class is personal. Parents can ask questions and discuss issues candidly. Adult adoptees and adoptive parents share their personal stories and reflect upon their biggest challenges.

One of the goals of the Adoption Readiness class is to encourage a desire for continued learning. Adoption is a life long process. As parents it is important to learn as much as we can and to keep learning from those who have gone before us. Included with the class is a resource book of articles and information. This collection of articles includes some that offer more information on a specific topic such as infertility or pre-natal drug exposure and some for future reference, such as how to find a therapist or deal with those tricky family tree school projects.

Perhaps the most valuable part of Adoption Readiness is meeting other prospective adoptive parents. Parents network with and learn from each other, and lifelong friendships have been formed. Parents share information about books they have read, intriguing websites, and favorite ethnic restaurants. Some parents have even found that they will be traveling to a foreign country at the same time.

So, in answer to my daughter's question, I say, "As parents we want to do the best we can to help our kids succeed. I have learned so much from other adoptive parents and adults who were adopted. I hope to keep learning, but now I can help others to know what I wish I would have known."





Food for Thought

Thoughts from the Adoption Constellation

A Brief Reflection Regarding Haiti and Adoption

By Lilly Glass Akoto LCSW



As I watched the news about the tragic events occurring in Haiti, my heart ached and a sorrowful heaviness began to envelop my soul. I watched my Haitian friend on the news and with her tear-stained eyes, she spoke of such immense pain and impenetrable hope. Soon after, I began to hear stories of adoptions from Haiti by parents from the United States.

These parents were already in the process of adopting and many are families right here, in Oregon. I wondered what my Haitian friend, who is also a mother, thought of the white couples who were bringing these Haitian children to America.

I began to think about the Haitian children who were abandoned as a result of this catastrophe, and about the children who were already in orphanages. As the news programs shared touching stories of white Americans adopting these precious Haitian children, I wondered: How many of them have taken the necessary classes, and obtained the necessary support to embark on this journey? How many of these stark white individuals truly understood this undertaking? The anger began to set in.

These adoptive parents are taking children who are coming from tragedy and trauma. Entering the United States, while seemingly a wonderful event for the family, is yet another traumatic experience for these children. The needs of these children reach far beyond what anyone can anticipate. While, on TV, the parents rejoiced that the child they were in the process of adopting was safe, I could only think of the movie *Adopted* and the main character's comment, "...you only got her because she was abandoned, and she knows that..." It was no wonder that my heart grew heavier and more pained as I watched these stories unfold.

As a bi-racial adult adoptee who grew up in a Caucasian world, I have come to understand the complexities involved in adoption, including race relations and identity development. As an LCSW, I am knowledgeable of the long-lasting effects of trauma on individuals, families and communities. While I truly believe these adoptive parents have pure hearts, and are good people, I do not believe they are aware of the true needs of these children. Are they prepared for the extra effort needed to provide these Haitian children with healthy identity development? Will they provide the emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual support necessary to promote healing from their trauma? What lengths will these parents go to, to ensure that these children have pride in their race and culture? How will these parents nurture

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Things Adoptive Parents Can Do To Keep Adopted Children Connected To their Birth Parents

In response to a post on Adoption Mosaic's blog, one adoptive parent came up with the following list of ways adoptive parents can include birth parents in their children's lives.

- *Internet searches for parents and family members
- *Introduction and contact with family members
- *With child, creating a folder full of letters and pictures for his/her birth mother – with the hope that mom will be found one day and given the folder
- * Conducting a search for the birth mother and if found, then creating opportunities for visits
- * Sending child to special language immersion programs so child will be able to communicate with their birth family in their native tongue.
- * Working with therapists to figure out how to best protect child if contact efforts are rejected by birth family.
- * Displaying photos of birth family
- * Creating a life book
- * Sending letters to birth family to let them know their child is loved, safe and well cared for
- * Going to workshops & talking to therapist about what is in the best interest of the child
- * Talking to our children and specifically asking them about how to best include and incorporate both families

(A Brief Reflection Regarding Haiti and Adoption Continued from page 8)

their children's self-confidence in a strange world that is full of mixed messages and more questions than answers?

It is not enough to think that just because you have a heart of gold, you can get through anything. It is not enough to just be great parents, or to think that because you are not prejudiced, you don't need to educate your child about the realities of racism in the United States. You have to be prepared for backlash from those who don't think white people should adopt black children. You have to be invested in learning about Haitian culture, and keeping the children connected to their heritage. Respectfully, you have to be prepared for those unexplained moments when these children cannot speak because they are paralyzed with fear -not understanding that their parents will never return- and afraid that you, the adoptive parents, will some day abandon them too.

While I remain appreciative of adoptive parents, my message to these specific adoptive parents is a reminder that it is imperative to reach out beyond yourself to get the support necessary to help your new family thrive.



Contributors

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Lilly Glass Akoto, LCSW - Lilly is an African-Caucasian-American who was adopted at 8 months from foster care. She has been reunited with her birth mother since 1991. She is on the Board of ASHA International, volunteers at the Dougy Center, and is active with Adoption Mosaic, often a speaker on the adoptee panels. She has a private practice in the community, specializing in multicultural issues, trauma, and grief and loss. Her contact information: www.LiLoCounseling.com; 503-442-0636

Catherine Maryse Anderson - Catherine is a single parent, freelance writer, poet, and public school humanities teacher in Portland, Maine. Her transracial family came together through domestic adoption and donor-assisted conception. Her poetry and essays have appeared in *Hip Mama*, *Adoptive Families* magazine, and many online venues. She blogs at <http://mamacandtheboys.blogspot.com>.

Astrid Dabbeni - Astrid has worked in adoption for over 18 years. She travels the country leading youth groups, presenting workshops on talking with children about adoption, transracial parenting, and other related topics. Her life-long interest in adoption is rooted in her own adoption at the age of four with her older sister from Colombia. Astrid is the Executive Director and co-founder of Adoption Mosaic.

Lani Faith - Lani has a bachelor degree in psychology and sociology, and a master's in marriage and family therapy. Her professional experience includes a decade in graduate school administration, development, marketing and various leadership positions in the not-for-profit sector. She has also enjoyed several years of public speaking and teaching. Lani is a late discovery adoptee – learning of her own adoption story, for the first time, at age 27. Since learning of her adoption, Lani has been reunited with her birth family.

Tara Kim- Editor - Tara has been active in the adoption community for over eight years. She has founded and led adoptee community groups, led adoptee youth groups, and served on the board of Adoption Mosaic for two and a half years. She currently serves as Adoption Mosaic's webmaster, blogger and newsletter editor. Tara was adopted from Korea at the age of two.

Livia Montana - Livia is a writer currently working on a novel and a collection of poetry. Her study of literature and philosophy intensified her interest in how the adoptive experience affects triad members. She was adopted from Portugal when she was four and a half years old.