

# An Honest & Supportive Discussion about Multi-racial Formed Families

**WEBINAR:**

**An Honest & Supportive  
Discussion about Multi-  
Racial Formed Families**



**January 28th, 7 PM**

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Formed Families Forward

## Who we are...

- Formed Families Forward, a family-led resource center in Northern Virginia, focused on training and direct support to foster, adoptive and kinship families in northern Virginia who are raising children and youth with special educational needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Peer support groups; webinars; virtual trainings;
- Participant in four No Va Trauma Informed Community Networks (TICNs)
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

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## Tonight's Plan

- Provide a context for this discussion
- Offer strategies for parents and caregivers
- Share resources and supports
- Open discussion!!!!

## Poll

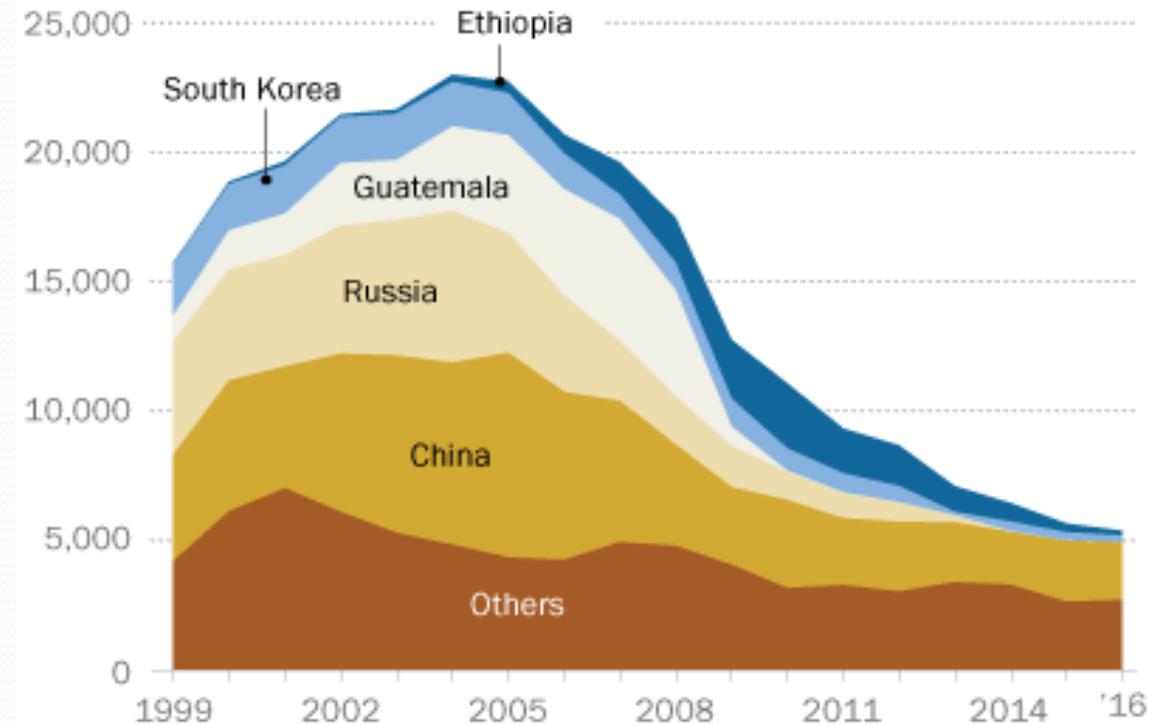
Which categories best describe you:

- Adoptive parent
- Kinship caregiver
- Foster parent
- Birth parent
- Professional

# International Adoption Statistics

## Steep decline in international adoptions to the U.S.

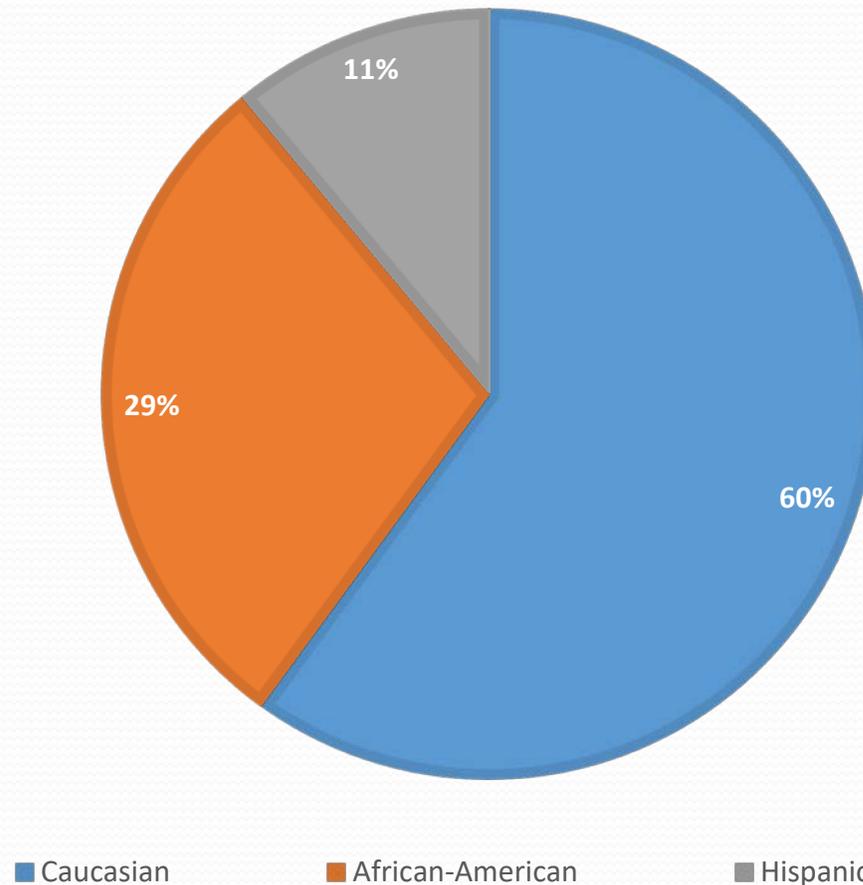
*Number of international adoptees to the U.S.*



Note: Figures include cases finalized abroad or in the U.S.  
Source: U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Race/Ethnicity of Foster Children in Virginia

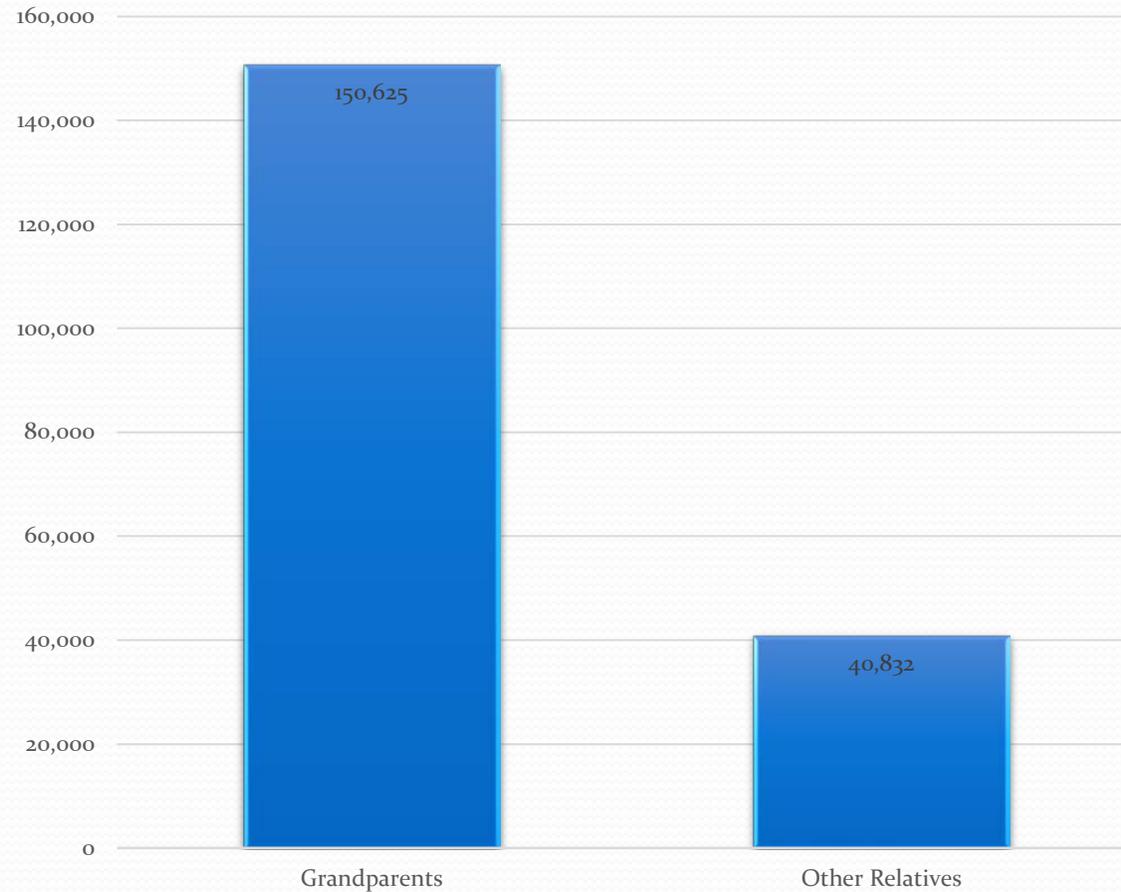


Virginia Department of Social Services, 2020

# Comparison of Race of Adopted Children and Adoptive Mothers

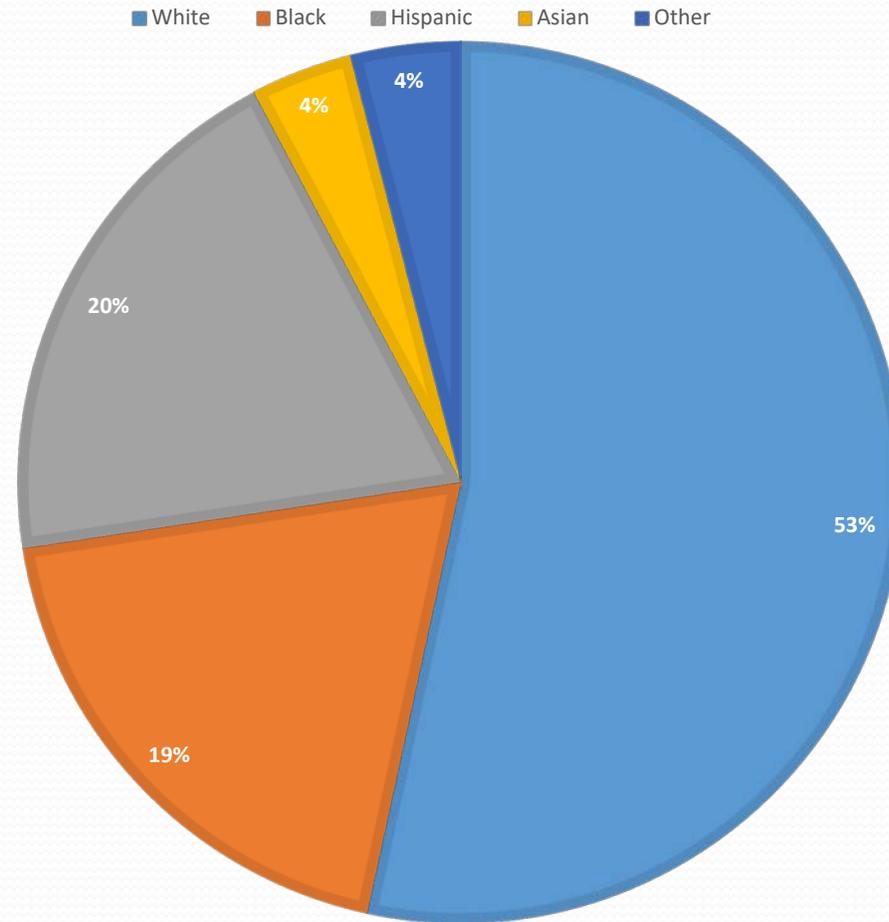
- A study of adopted kindergarten students showed that 44% of them were being cared for by adoptive mother of a different race
- The majority of these adoptive parents are white, older, well-educated, and relatively affluent
- The breakdown by race:
  - 90% of Asian adoptees
  - 64% of multiracial adoptees
  - 62% of Hispanic adoptees
  - 55% of Black adoptees
- By contrast, only 3% of white adoptees had been adopted by a mother of a different race or ethnicity

# Children Living with Kinship Families, Virginia



United States Census,  
American Community  
Survey, 2018

# Race of Grandparent Caregivers



United States Government  
Accountability Office, 2020

## Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss occurs in two situations: when a person is physically present but psychologically unavailable, or when a person is physically absent but psychologically present. The latter type is most common in foster care and adoption.

Source: North American Council on Adoptable Children

# Types of Loss Specific to Child Raised by Parents of Another Race, Ethnicity or Culture

- Loss of culture
- Loss of religion
- Loss of racial connections
- Traditions
- Country (international adoptions)

## Self-reflection

“It is a belief too many White people have: if they have or adopt a child of color, then they can’t be racist.”

Ibram X. Kendi, Director of Boston University’s Center for Antiracist Research, 2020

## Self-reflection, continued

- Parents and caregivers must withhold judgement of birth parents/birth family cultural practices and do not share negative thoughts with children.
- Parents must promote anti-racism in themselves, their families, and communities. Anti-racism is the practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.
- Parents must understand and acknowledge white privilege and the manner in which whiteness affects their relationships and interactions with both their children and the world. Understand that children of color will not carry that privilege with them when they are away from the protection of the family.

(Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020)

## Self-reflection, Continued

- All family members, including White children and extended family when appropriate, should participate in discussions about race and racism. It is an opportunity to connect as a family, learn, and help children of color feel a sense of attachment as opposed to being further singled out for differences.
- Resist buying into the “lucky rescued child” stereotype. Having a stable family does not diminish the well-being that comes when we meet a child’s need for connection to and pride in their racial heritage.
- Engage in ongoing, age-appropriate conversations with children about how they want to be represented or participate in civil discourse. Give them a voice and respect their decisions.

(Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020)

## Acknowledgment of Racism and Difference with our Children

“Transracial adoptive parents should recognize that parenting brown-skinned children involves not only parenting them and raising the children to become successful, independent, responsible, and kind adults, but also instilling in the children racial pride and an understanding and acceptance of the child’s racial cultural norms, racial reality and history.”

- Garlinghouse, 2012

## Acknowledgment, continued

- Acknowledge the compounded impact that racism may add to other unjust experiences (poverty, exposure to substance use, abuse, neglect, disability) by your children prior to your care.
- Check in with your children and give them the opportunity to discuss race and racism but listen to their needs and gauge conversations based on their input.
- Avoid equating your challenges past or present with the challenge your children face in a racist world. Equating your challenges with the child's can negate race and the destructive power of racism.
- Use your past challenges to build your compassion, understanding, and commitment to the hard work of being an anti-racist.

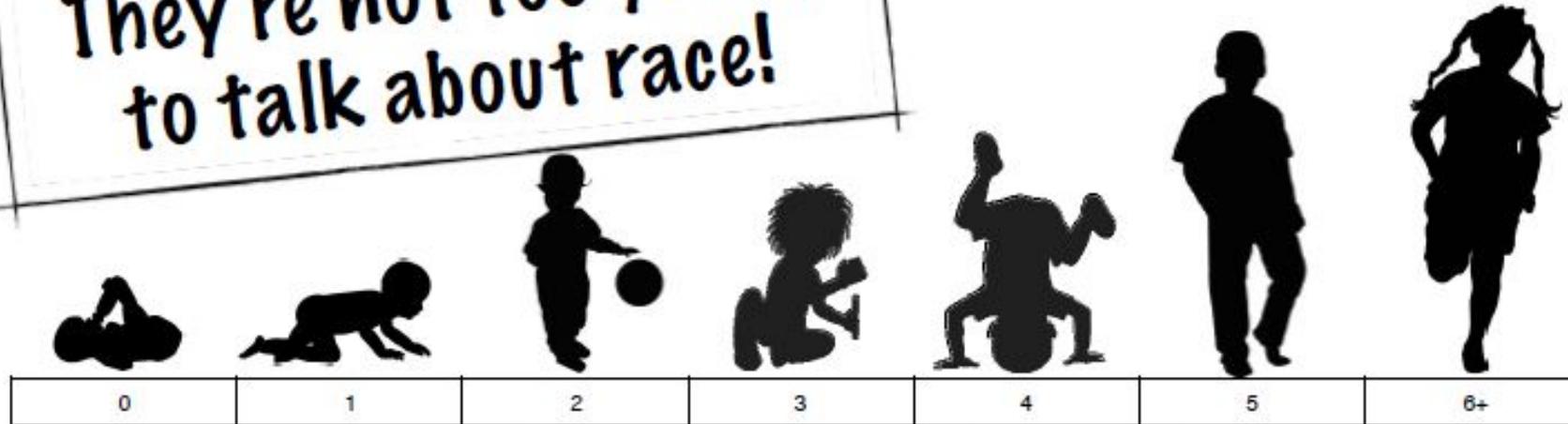
(adapted from Garlinghouse, 2012; Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020)

## Acknowledgment, Continued

- Parents, caregivers and professionals have a moral and ethical responsibility to provide children with every opportunity to have a strong racial identity and connection to their roots. Children can and should be taught about race early in life. Silence about race reinforces racism.
- Recognize and acknowledge the reality of racism.

(adapted from Garlinghouse, 2012; Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020)

# They're not too young to talk about race!



At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al, 2008)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. Silence about race reinforces racism by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

Do some learning of your own to get ready for conversations with children. Here are some good places to seek information and training:

- Teaching Tolerance — [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)
- Raising Race Conscious Children — [raceconscious.org](http://raceconscious.org)
- Embrace Race — [embraceace.org](http://embraceace.org)
- Teaching for Change — [teachingforchange.org](http://teachingforchange.org)
- AORTA Cooperative — [aorta.coop](http://aorta.coop)
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — [fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com](mailto:fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com)
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — [dvaevc.org](http://dvaevc.org)

# Microaggressions

- Be cognizant of micro-aggressions, which are subtle forms of racist stereotyping. When child reports a micro-aggression then take action to correct the problem, even if it means having an uncomfortable conversation with a family member or close friend.
- Some examples include invading personal space by touching hair, telling children they are lucky to be adopted into a good family or asking if their real family members have dark or light skin, what race are you?

(adapted from Garlinghouse, 2012; Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020)

## **Mentors are Critical to Healthy Social Emotional Development**

“You must invite and welcome Black and Brown teachers and mentors into your life—and your children’s lives—with intention and humility. Without the guidance of those who live it, you will not be able to do the job adequately.”

-Murph-Brown & Stevens, 2020

## Benefits of Mentorship

- Mentors of the same race and/or ethnicity as children of color can share cultural experiences with children and parents.
- White parents will never know what it is like to experience racism. A mentor does know and can relate to children of color in a way the parent cannot.
- Mentors can provide practical support to parents when it comes to caring for hair, skin or facilitating communication with birth parents/families who speak another language.

# Identifying Mentors

- Places of worship
- Parent/caregiver workplace
- Other foster, adoptive or kinship families
- Online support groups
- Ask mental health professionals/pediatricians for referrals
- Ask adoption or foster care agencies for referrals
- Heritage camps for international adoptees and their families
- School social workers or counselors

## Poll

Please share if you have ever addressed a situation of racism or racial bias on behalf of your children within the following contexts:

- School
- Place of worship
- Family member
- Neighbor
- Family friend
- I have never had to address racism or racial bias
- Other

# Resources on Race

- *“How To Be an Antiracist”* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *“Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption”* by Bryan Stevenson
- *“The Fire Next Time”* by James Baldwin
- *“The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”* by M. Alexander
- *“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race”* by Beverly Daniel Tatum
- *“White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People To Talk About Racism”* by Robin DiAngelo
- *“Between the World and Me”* by Ta -Nehisi Coates
- *Teaching Tolerance | Diversity, Equity And Justice* website of the Southern Poverty Law Center

# Resources on Parenting Children of a Different Race

- [The Realities of Raising a Kid of a Different Race \(time.com\)](#)
- [White parents, Black children and the lessons they need to learn - The Washington Post](#)
- [Transracial Adoption — What Parents Need to Know \(Part One\) - Boston Post Adoption Resources \(bpar.org\)](#)
- [Being Anti-Racist: A Critical Way to Support Children of Color in Foster Care and Adoption](#) from NACAC
- [“Raising Multiracial Children: Tools for Nurturing Identity in a Racialized World”](#) by Farzana Nayani
- [“Come Rain or Come Shine: A White Parent's Guide to Adopting and Parenting Black Children”](#) by Rachel Garlinghouse

# Regional Resources

- Center for Adoption Support and Education
- North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)
- Ethiopian Heritage and Culture Camp
- Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption Association (FCFCAA)
- Fairfax County Department of Family Services Kinship Cafe
- MANY resources in our online Family Resource Directory, <https://resourcedirectory.formedfamiliesforward.org/>

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