Common Questions from White Adoptive Parents

Aren't we making race too big of a deal?
Many white parents believe that talking to their children about race somehow ruins their innocence. This is similar to saying, "I'm afraid to explain traffic safety to my child, so I will let her be crushed by a car." Your child of color will face challenges that are directly related to how society perceives them. Like it or not, we are a society that has created racial categories, and those categories have meaning. It is far better for your child to understand and equip them to face racism than it is to ignore it.

If I talk to my child about race, isn't this going to make her feel different?
If there is an overwhelming theme that emerges from listening to the voices of adult adoptees, it is that being a child of color and growing up in a white family is what makes your child feel different, not acknowledging the fact. Talking to your child about race educates them and prepares them to live in a world that has created this social construct.

If we teach children about racism, won't this teach them to feel bad about themselves?
Teaching your child about racism helps to protect them and empowers them to act on someone else's ignorance. Sadly, systemic racism and individual acts of racism are realities that your child must be prepared to deal with. Denying this fact will leave your child isolated and alone. In addition, when racial incidents do happen to your child, they need to know that you are a safe person to come to.

If we prepare our children to face prejudice and racism, aren't we teaching them to look for things that may not be there? Won't this make them paranoid?
No, teaching your child to face prejudice and racism will give them words for things they are experiencing. As a parent, you want to encourage your child to share their real feelings and help them process their racial experiences. Instead of making them paranoid, this empowers them to safeguard their dignity.

Even if I do not make changes to my environment or life, isn't it better for the child to be in a loving home instead of in foster care?
Providing your child a loving home does not excuse the changes that may need to happen in your child's environment. Immersing yourself in spaces and communities where you are the minority and your child is part of the majority takes intentionality. Is it really loving to know the best for your child and not do it? Would you

do that about anything else? If your child was sick and you knew medicine would make their quality of life significantly better, that it would help them go from surviving to thriving, would you skip the medicine?

As long as I love my child, isn't that enough?

White adoptive parents often enter into transracial adoption naive to the lived experiences of people of color. In addition, they enter cross-race parenting with the worldviews they have learned about race from other white people which often includes color-blind ideology or minimizing racial difference. When white parents refuse to do the work of listening and learning from adult transracial adoptees and people of color, their children are the ones left to suffer those consequences.

Is it ok for me to say I want a white baby?

Yes. Parenting a child of color comes with additional responsibility beyond what is required in parenting a same-race child. Children are children, of course, no matter what color, so on the surface level you may believe that only love is required. Imagine parenting a child in a wheelchair and not being willing to equip your child with the supportive equipment and network needed to help your child thrive. Similarly, if you are not willing or able to provide your child of color with the supportive tools they will need to thrive, it's okay to admit that. Remember that the goal is not about you "getting a child". The goal is to find the right family for a child in need. This is not a decision that should be rushed into in order to get a child for your family; the needs of your potential child must remain at the forefront. Transracial adoption requires you to be thoughtful and intentional in this process. As you consider bringing a child of color into your home, think about your willingness to take on the additional responsibilities. Is your spouse willing? Is your extended family willing to educate themselves about the realities your child will face? If the answer is no to any of these questions, it is definitely okay to say you want a white baby.

For more guidance, teaching, and support, you can find our Race, Foster Care, and Adoption 3 course series in the Be the Bridge Academy.

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