

## **Single Parent and Transracial Adoption:**

### ***Whether to Go It Alone and What Shall My Family Look Like?***

*by Marc Blumenstein, Adoptions Together Board Member*

I am a single adoptive parent who happens to be a father. My son is African American; I am not. We are a black and white family. Our family was created through adoption. My son, now 14, came home with me when he was three weeks old. The journey, while complicated and challenging at times for different reasons over the years, is the best journey I could have ever hoped for. I thank my son every day for the wonder, the purpose, and the joy he has brought into my life. I thank him for giving me reason to grow and develop my knowledge of parenting and its defined gender roles, racial issues which are still so prevalent in our society today, and how it indeed takes a village to successfully parent your child and help them grow into a happy, healthy, focused, and independent adult. I pray that he will grow to be truly thankful for the family we are, and the lessons we've learned and continue to learn together. I know I will never be able to thank my son enough. Never.

Where do I start? Where did it begin?

I knew in high school that I was going to create my family – at least in part – through adoption. I knew that I wanted to adopt a minority child or children. And I knew that at some point, was I not married, I would move forward with this dream. For me the choice was simple. I always wanted to be a father; I knew there were children out there who needed parents and homes. We could help each other out I thought. What I did not plan on, nor could I have ever imagined, that my son has given me more than I will ever be able to give to him. He's given me a life, a purpose, a reason for being. And here I am. Single parenting, let alone single parent transracial adoption, does not, and should not go without thought and planning, or without soul searching and honest assessment of one's life and circumstances. Again, never. You need to know this.

Notice there is a similar message having to do with (1) transracial adoption; and (2) single parent adoption. Never enter into the decision to do either lightly, or without heavy soul searching and planning, brutal honesty, and self-evaluation. And, never cease to thank your lucky stars for the journey you are about to follow. I am the luckiest man in the world for all the experiences that my son has brought my way, with all the joys, growth, and constant reassessment of my being, my purpose, my relationships, and our life together.

To be sure, there are advantages to single parent adoption. While raising my son from infancy to adolescence, my rules at home were the determining factor. Don't get me wrong, as with parenting in general – how often you enforce the rules and how flexible you will be is no different than a dual parent home. However, there was no one to pay good cop against my bad cop. No discussions with a partner to present a unified front. My front was it, folks. And when that happened, no, my son was not happy. That said, I've learned to depend on dear friends for support, to help me arrange pick-up from school, drop-off to sports, and simply spend time at home with him which allows me to leave and breathe. It's all worked out better this way than I had planned because I'm fortunate to have very dear and special friends. They know who they are. My advice if I were to give any would be to make sure you have help arranged prior to becoming a parent if you're going to go the single route. You cannot – and should not – do this alone. It will not work.

As you plan this venture, think of family and friends, neighbors and other parents; anyone to help you with the daily transactions of raising your child and help you keep your sanity and your job. Don't forget you will be working and you will need support from your employer. Children (and parents) get sick, need rest, have emergencies, and it impacts your other daily responsibilities. I tried to warn you that you never enter this decision without planning and honest assessment of your situation. It's exhausting just to write it down.

While you're soul-searching and determining if parenting is a venture you want to experience alone, think about the child who will one day be part of your family. Step back and forget that it's about you because it's not. It's about that gift the universe will be giving you on loan for a period of time. Step back and appreciate that everything you choose to do going forward will be with the purpose that your goal is to make the best home for that child you possibly can. You are, I hope, planning on creating a very special family for that child to remember the rest his or her life. You will be supplying the foundation to support that child when you are no longer there.

What does that child look like? Can you see him? Do you care? Does he care what you like? If he doesn't look like you, how do you make him feel wonderful about what he does look like? How do you make him feel wonderful about everything that he is – his history, his birth culture if there is one, and his "how he got to you"? You need to think about this now – for when you're parenting, it will be too late to start planning these strategies.

You need to have answers for all those questions at the spur of the moment when your three year old asks "*Does my mother look like me?*" before you have your first cup of coffee on only three hours of sleep because you were up all night taking care of a sick toddler. And most importantly, you need to embrace all these issues like no other you've ever experienced because you're celebrating everything that child is. That child came to you through adoption, and how lucky are you that he did? And that child, that gift from the heavens deserves a parent who can give this to him. You're the adult making the decision to adopt – either with a partner or by yourself – make sure you relay to this child that you're glad you did and that he's beautiful, special no matter what he looks like. Can you handle this? If not, be honest, it's ok.

Finally, celebrate the family you have created. Adopting does not make the child less yours. It does not make you less the parent. No, it simply puts you on a different road than many, which still leads to the same place. As parents, each of us loves, guides, rears these children from the moment they come home with us to the day they walk out of our home and we cry. That is the job we've selected. For me, it's my favorite job in the world. I'm a Dad. My family is black and white. My family is different to some and similar to others. It's the family I've created and have loved for 14 years. What will your family be should you elect to adopt? Sit down and think, and feel, and god bless you for considering doing this. He's already blessed me.