The Personal Is Political: Racial Identity and Racial Justice in Transracial Adoption

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This is what Korean culture in my home looked like when I was growing up
"Charity is no substitute for justice...we must never ignore injustices that make charity necessary, or the inequities that make it possible."

- Michael Eric Dyson
Transracial adoptee justice involves:

• Intersectional thinking - to understand that as transracial adoptees, our lives are impacted by both race and adoption
• Being believed when we experience discrimination and oppression based on our racial, ethnic and/or adoption identities
• Having the white people in our lives do their own work to understand the history of race, power, privilege and oppression in our country
• Having people in our lives who care about our communities, not just us as individuals
• Considering the long haul

Transracial adoptee justice involves Intersectional thinking:

to understand that as transracial adoptees, our lives are impacted by both race and adoption, not just one or the other
Dr. Jessica Leineweaver

“Acceptable fictions” in adoption subtract and erase
Transracial adoption justice means we are believed when we talk about our experiences with discrimination and oppression

“To be a Korean adoptee in Minnesota is to be both hyper-visible and invisible at the same time. It means that people can tell you they don’t see you as Korean as if that is a compliment...

Being a Korean adoptee in Minnesota means having to explain your personal adoption stories to people you don’t know because no one understands how you can be from Plymouth or St. Cloud or Moorhead or Rochester when asked, “Where are you from. No, where are you really from?””
Dr. H. David Kirk

Rejection of difference

Acceptance of difference

Transracial adoptee justice involves having the white people in our lives do their own work to understand the history of race, power, privilege and oppression
Transracial adoptee justice involves having people in our lives who care about our communities, not just us as individuals.
Transracial adoptee justice considers the long haul
Research finds that having a strong sense of racial and ethnic identity can be protective factors to youth for dealing with oppression, racism and discrimination.

April Harris Britt

Found African American teens whose parents helped them understand race and racism were more prepared to cope with racism and discrimination.

Cindy Sangalang

Impact of strong ethnic identity on Cambodian youth.

Having a strong sense of ethnic identity provided a protective factor against mental health problems, in light of the heavy discrimination Cambodian youth faced by their non-Cambodian peers, teachers, school administrators and staff, community members and in particular police officers.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association

Native American youth with strong identity and cultural ties, even with high ACES, had higher positive outcomes

Parents talked about feeling inauthentic and the pressure they felt from the Korean community for not being “Korean enough” in parenting their kids.
Moving forward

• Heart of humility and growth mindset

• Understand that you can’t separate the personal and the political

Call to action

• Respect transracial adoptees as the experts they are

• Understand that you are not an ally because of who you love, but by your actions

• It is your job to seek to understand the experiences of others and what they need, not what you think they need

• Being an ally is not about the recognition.

• Find support from others doing anti-racist work

• Be an interrupter

• Leverage the power and privilege you have to bring about social change
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