

Pact, An Adoption Alliance: An A+ Source of Information about Transcultural and Transracial Adoption

By Arleta James, PCC

Ellen is the 14-year-old birth child of Sharon and Todd. She is one of three birth children and three children by adoption. Ellen attended therapy with her mother and one of her brothers by adoption, Kenny. During therapy, Kenny described how he continued to miss his birthmother. Kenny's birth family is Mexican and his adoptive family is Caucasian. Daily, when he compares his skin color to theirs, he is reminded of his losses. Ellen was saddened. She stated, "I thought we were his family now."



Marianne was adopted from El Salvador when she was 3-years-old. Her adoptive family is comprised of her Mom, Dad and her sister, Donna. Donna looks just like her Mom—brunette, green eyes, tall and thin. The two share many similar interests—reading, action movies and crafts. Marianne, on the other hand, has dark brown skin, brown (almost black) eyes and long black hair. She enjoys athletics and being with a crowd of people. Donna and Marianne have always had a rocky relationship. Marianne always does things to make Donna mad. In a therapy session addressing this issue, Marianne blurted out tearfully, "It would just be so much easier to get along with Mom and Donna, if I looked like them!" In essence, Marianne's poor treatment of Donna is the manifestation of her many feelings of being a transcultural adoptee.

1 Arleta James, PCC, ABC of Ohio, 440-230-1960, arletajames@gmail.com, www.arletajames.com, *Welcoming a Brother or Sister by Adoption: From Navigating New Relationships to Building a Loving Family* (Jessica-Kinsley Publishers - <http://www.jkp.com/>, 2013)

Rick is currently 15 years old and a sophomore in high school. He was adopted as an infant. He is bi-cultural: his birthmother is Caucasian and his birthfather is of Middle Eastern decent. He has dark brown, almost black, hair and dark brown eyes. His skin is olive. He has resided with his adoptive parents in the same community his whole life. His appearance, in comparison to his Caucasian parents, has caused some issues over time. Strangers stare when the family is out. Kids have asked him why he looks different than his parents. However, overall, Rick has had little difficulty.

Rick's life changed when our country declared war on Iraq. An American soldier from his home town died in Iraq. Classmates that he had known his whole life began implying that the death was due to "people like him." Rick was stunned. He had no idea how to respond to these remarks. It seemed the less he replied, the more the comments flowed. Rick's two Caucasian brothers, ages 12 and 13, attend the same school as Rick. They overheard these prejudiced statements. In their efforts to aide their brother, a fist fight broke out. Shortly thereafter, the parents were called to meet with the principal. The end result of the meeting was a school assembly designed to raise awareness of the value of cultural differences. At home, Rick, and his parents and siblings began a series of discussions regarding how each family member could more effectively handle prejudice and discrimination in the future

Rick, Ellen, Kenny and Marianne are but a few of **many, many** examples of how adoptees, brothers, sisters and parents may be affected in transculturally or transracially adoption-built families. The Haitian earthquake, the circumstances in Ethiopia, the "call" upon Christians to adopt the orphans and so on, continues to increase the number of families whose members are comprised of diverse cultures.

Pre-adoption, many parents state, "Color doesn't matter to me. I can love any child." This is true. However, we live in a society that remains plagued by prejudices, discrimination and the stereotyping of various groups of peoples based on their race, religion, sexual preference, citizenship and their socio-economic status. So, adopting across cultural or racial lines does really add another layer to the family created via adoption. Parents and **all** the kids will deal with public comments and questions when family members don't all look alike.

[Pact. An Adoption Alliance](#), has as its goal "for every child to feel wanted, honored and loved, a cherished member of a strong family with proud connection to the rich cultural heritage that is his or her birth right." Overall, Pact exceeds in working toward this goal. Pact is an A+ source of information about all aspects of transcultural and transracial adoption.

Here is a sampling of the vast array of articles put forth on the Pact website:

- [When Family Members Don't Support a Child's Racial Identity](#)
- [Building Racial Identity: The Challenge of Religion](#)
- [African American Perceptions of Adoption](#)
- [Raising Kids Multiculturally](#)
- [Different Birth Families of Adopted Siblings](#)
- [Helping Your Child Develop a Positive Racial/Ethnic Identity](#)
- [Building Racial Identity: Choosing a School](#)

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In addition to articles, Pact provides a book list, [A Few of Our Favorite Books](#). Question about reading books with your children? No problem, Pact has this covered as well with their booklet, [Mirror and Windows: Using Books to Support Young Children](#). Written by Pact for parents and teachers, *Mirrors & Windows* is filled with helpful tips and information about using books with young children. When should you start reading to your child? What type of books is important to have at home or in the classroom? How can a book be used to as a conversation starter? What about kids who have difficulty reading? *Mirrors & Windows* is essential reading.

Looking for a cultural camp experience? Pact has that too. The camp experience is titled, [A Gathering for Adoptive Families with Children of Color](#). This camp is just one of the many events sponsored by Pact. In fact, each month Pact offers at least one workshop, conference or event specifically designed for adopted families. There is *AdopTalk: Talking with Kids about Adoption*, *Baby Care for Adopted infants*, *True Colors: Putting Together the Pieces of the Transracial Adoption Puzzle* and more—[Upcoming Event Calendar](#).



Visit [Pact, An Adoption Alliance](#) website or [Facebook](#) today! If you like what you see, consider becoming a [member!](#)

We also need to mention that Pact founders, Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg are the authors of [Inside Transracial Adoption](#).

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