The Plights of Interracial Adoption

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Introduction

It has become a popular trend within Hollywood for celebrities to adopt interracial children. Although it is praised as a benevolent act, there are many challenges associated with the concept. Interracial adoption possess detrimental social and economic issues.

Background

- Transracial adoption can be defined as racially/culturally different parents and children joining together into an adoptive family.
- The earliest transracial adoptions can be dated back to the late 50's. A collaboration between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America lead to the Indian Adoption Project.
- This project was designed to remove children from reservations in effort to assimilate them to mainstream society (Fanshel, 1972).
- By the 1960s child advocacy groups in the US and CA began programs that would find homes for African American children.
- These groups often came under attack by minority communities for promoting a form of what they called race and cultural genocide.

Qualitative Findings

Racial Passing

Racial passing refers to a person classified as a member of a racial group attempting to be accepted as a member of a different racial group. Numerous private adoption agencies encourage racial passing by separating children into “biracial” and “traditional” groups. This circumstance, causes children to identify with a particular race or ethnicity.

“Color-Blindness”

“Color-blind” is a term, which refers to an individual ignoring one’s race or ethnicity.
- Some adoptive parents enforce “color-blindness”, which can harm the child because when they get out into the “real” world, they discover and are unprepared for racism.
- By denying or de-emphasizing a child’s race or ethnicity, an inter racial adoptee is more likely to “internalize their adoptive parents” cultural worldview and identify more strongly with the majority culture than with their ethnic cultures” (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983).
- Because adopters are often times upper-middle class, they live in communities of little diversity resulting in the pressure to assimilate.
- In public settings, surrounded by strangers or friends, adoptees may feel ostracized and inferior because others do not believe they are apart of their familial unit.

Quantitative Findings

Seven out of ten adopters are predominantly white because they possess good economic backgrounds for high priced adoption loans or adequate funds for a child

Loss

- Cultural Heritage
- Self-esteem
- Racial/ Ethnic Identity Development
- Pride & comfort of race/ ethnicity

Conclusions

Before adopting an interracial child, parents must decide if they are willing to cross “racial lines” meaning whether they are prepared to learn about another race or ethnicity an d culture. Some ways to do this:
- Racial Inculcation: the teaching of coping skills to help children deal effectively with racism and discrimination
- Enculturation: concerted effort to teach about their birth cultures and heritages
- Socializing with diverse individuals and providing child with a diverse environment

Before adopting a child THINK! Just because one may have the economic resources to financially provide for the child THINK about his/her overall well being.

For social workers, be an ACTIVE agent and make sure the adoptee is able to psychologically adjust.

References


