

PIH MIXED RACE MATTERS 2022

Transracial Adoption

When Transracial Adoption Fails

Paul Girard Egbers-Kane writes about his experience of being adopted transracially



I won't sugar-coat it, most transracial adoptees claim their adoption was the best thing that happened to them; they were well loved and cared for and they have no interest in finding their birth family.

Then there are TRAs like me for whom TRA was a case of *out of the frying pan into the fire* i.e., the adoption was a catastrophic failure and finding our birth families was the only good outcome.

When you wake up one day and find yourself at the mercy of Born-Again Christians, you know you hit rock bottom, in the same way many homeless and destitutes have found themselves in a church-run hostel being controlled and told what to do, and orphans in war-ravaged countries find themselves at the mercy of charity workers who end up abusing them.

This is not to sound ungrateful or *bite the hand that feeds me*: obviously there were some benefits to being transracially adopted but sadly the high price some of us pay in terms of the devastating lasting damage to our confidence and mental health far outweighs the benefits and pros. Let me clarify something from the get-go: any family could have adopted us; we could have had a completely different upbringing with a different name in another part of the country; so, we adoptees do not owe anyone anything. We were not *lucky* and we do not have a debt of gratitude to our adoptive families, in fact they were lucky to have us and we would have grown up somewhere with someone anyway.

Today I talk to couples trying for a baby and when I ask them would they consider adopting, the most common reservation is not that the child may come with baggage but, that if they fail to bond with the infant or it fails to attach to them, it might do lasting emotional and mental damage to the child who becomes unable to form healthy relationships in life. These people are showing a natural *human empathy and compassion* which any natural, healthy people can show to children, and this is why people adore their nephews and nieces. It is also why adoption occurs throughout the animal kingdom, where abandoned or orphaned offspring are taken in by adults who raise them as their own. To the extent that some primates, penguins and walruses will trample the offspring to death fighting over custody rights and the right to raise young as their own. We also see this natural instinct to protect the young played out in the politics of LGBT community's right to produce and raise children and how to raise LGBT kids.

So, except in the case of lions who practice infanticide, adoption per se is a perfectly natural occurrence. Most fostering and adoption is done with the best will in the world and purely altruistic intentions because of the natural instinct to protect the young. In many cases with human adoption children are indeed *rescued* and *saved* from extremely adverse even dangerous situations with birth parents who might be racist or drink or drug addicted or in jail or with serious mental health problems in which case adoption is a no-brainer. In these cases where there is obviously a serious

child protection issue, the urgency of the situation and the safety and security of the child is paramount and clearly race is not an issue. Similarly other animals' bond and attach to their adopted offspring based largely on their scent and how they smell, not their appearance or how they look. Blind people attach and identify with others based on their voice, smell, and touch. They do not recognise others based on their appearance, which is the Achilles' heel of transracial adoption, where children are visibly and obviously adopted, as opposed to same race adoption where they can pass unnoticed.

I am not saying that were I White my adoption would have gone without a glitch and we would not have had half the issues, but it did not help that I ended up at the mercy of an abusive religious narcissistic mother and a narcissistic enabling family that ended up becoming an actual religious cult. Anyone who has seen *Carrie* or *The People Under the Stairs* can relate.

From my experience there are three primary reasons why my adoption was a catastrophic failure and it completely broke down when I was 15 and I was taken into care. 1) not being TRA per se but the fact that we moved out to an exclusively White village where we stood out like a sore thumb and we were sitting targets for the far right racists and we ended up literally under siege; 2) my adopted family are evangelical pentecostals which made us even weirder and more marginalised plus the religious abuse behind closed doors, cutting us off from the wicked world, and setting us up to fail in the real world; 3) having a malignant narcissistic adoptive mother who held the whole family hostage to her narcissistic abuse, control, gaslighting, the end result being we all fled to the four corners of the earth and the whole family is split up now and mummy is driving daddy into an early grave but we are powerless to stop her. So, it's *the isolation, the religious mania and the toxic narcissistic family* which is why my adoption irretrievably broke down and why I keep banging on about keeping Mixed Race and TRA kids in racially mixed communities, where they will not be sitting targets for racist abuse or lambs led to the slaughter as in our case.

When my adoptive parents moved us into a £2million house in a Hertfordshire hamlet, they were only concerned with their upward mobility; being upper middle class and having a big family in a huge house with 4 cars, au pairs, swimming pool, piano lessons, a caravan and a boat. They were not interested in meeting the cultural and spiritual needs of the child[ren], they were only interested in their religious agenda and what a shining example of a Christian rainbow family we were and colour doesn't matter. The harsh reality however was that colour mattered very much to the extent none of the White kids or neighbours wanted to associate with us and we were ostracised and subjected to racist gangstalking driven I have to say mostly by working class Whites whose racist name calling emanated directly from the Vicarage Road football terraces, which is why I have an issue with working class racism because it stems directly from socioeconomic jealousy.

When you drive up and down the motorways and A-roads of the UK the big blue and green signs direct travellers up and down the country giving the impression the world is our oyster and we have freedom to *travel freely without let or hindrance*. The reality being Mixed Race however was that there were racist gatekeepers and gangstalkers (including police and other bullies) on every corner literally blocking my path, telling me to go back to the jungle and swing on the trees, and that I could not in fact travel freely and to *keep your filthy half-caste hands off our girls*. There were many areas in society where I was not welcome, including the sixth form common room at Watford Grammar, when I entered for the first time the entire year turned their backs on me and I had to run the gauntlet through the common room. The elitist gaslighting, marginalising and invalidating continued, hence my poor A-level results. Now if I had come from a poor family in a council flat like Sadiq Khan or Alan Sugar, there would have been some acceptance on grounds of charitable pity and 'look how lucky you are', but coming from a wealthy upper class interracial family went down like a lead balloon, just like the Harry and Megan fiasco. The Whites accept us when we are 'ghetto trash' but

they cannot tolerate Black and Mixed Race being equal to or above them which is why I take issue with working class White racism in particular because it is there to pull us down and destroy any chance of BAME success or upward mobility.

The adoption papers specified the adopters should be able to *meet the cultural religious and ethnic needs of the child* and my TRA family failed on all three requirements because we never talked about race, Black history, Caribbean culture, how to combat racism and bar one 'minstrel' type character in church I never met any Black people until I was 25. We had no frame of reference for identifying with other people of colour and building a sense of pride in being Black / Mixed Race, and that we truly have a stake in society and a place in the world. We only learned about what it means to be a person of colour through the racist gaslighting and gangstalking which went on for 13 years in the class room, in the playground and outside school. Needless to say, 13 years of sinister and blatant racist abuse at school coupled with 15 years religious narcissistic abuse behind closed doors took its toll on my mental health and I am spending the rest of my life in recovery from the resultant Complex PTSD, depression, paranoia etc.

When I met my birth mother she said if she clapped eyes on my adoptive mother, she would smash her face in because when my birth mother stipulated on the adoption papers, she wanted me to go to a Christian family, she didn't mean a bunch of religious freaks who would mess me up for life. She meant C of E as opposed to Catholic, although if my St Lucian family had had any say in the matter, I would probably have had a more normal healthy Catholic upbringing rather than being treated as the scapegoated child in a narcissistic religious cult.

When I finally took the stick out of my adoptive mother's hand and beat her back with it she realised she had lost control and after calling in the village bobby to restrain me on the floor and having church people lay hands on me to cast out demons, she finally called in social services who were so bewildered and perplexed at this weird dysfunctional family situation they immediately offered to remove and place me in foster care. Now if my parents had called social services for help years ago things might not have deteriorated to the point where I was running away from home, being locked out when they went to church, being locked in my room with no tea, having my mouth washed out with vinegar, having church freaks lay hands on me and cast out demons, being hit with a stick and slapped in the face, being told I'm an evil wicked thief who will end up in prison followed by hell. Having said that in the 1980's rural Hertfordshire communities there were no Black or Brown police officers, teachers or social workers, so the White teachers and police officers just turned a blind eye or joined in the racist scapegoating and making me the problem.

But there was one White social worker who wrote in her report and I quote "This is a bizarre family situation, the Egbers family live in a large house with vast grounds yet they are wearing second hand clothes and being fed a diet of bread and jam, they are highly religious and clearly Paul is very unhappy living here and there are concerns he is suffering racial abuse".

Finally, someone saw the situation for what it was and took action and I was placed with a foster family who I am still in touch with today, until I became of age and left Hertfordshire as fast as my little brown legs in shorts could carry me. But for 15 years I was literally a hostage to this abusive narcissistic family who adopted me with good intentions but as soon as I learned to speak and form opinions which did not suit the narcissist's narrative I became scapegoat number 1. When I started shoplifting for food the whole village labelled me that thieving coloured boy and then it was one racist stereotype after another imposed on me; the Black thief: the confused "half-caste"; the problematic coloured kid; the volatile mental kid; the loose cannon, the Barnardos' liability etc.. This is how the narcissistic gaslighting went on for years and it still goes on with Mixed Race and TRA kids

today which is why Megan left and it is exactly why I will keep banging on about keeping BAME kids in mixed areas, even if the adopting families are wealthy or upper class, children need to be able to identify with their own because *just as a village can raise a child it can also destroy them*.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions and my TRA upbringing was a hellish nightmare for which I can never forgive my adoptive family because for the rest of my life I am left to recover, heal and make sense of it all. Also, because my toxic, narcissistic adoptive mother will never apologise or admit her mistakes because a narcissist is never wrong. In the last 35 years I could have so easily become another tragic statistic of *when transracial adoption fails*. Fortunately, I have got the help I need to recover and I have learned it is not having a horrific past that matters so much as how I respond to it today, and if I overeat or drink myself to death then the racist narcs have won. So as long as I look after myself and stay positive and productive with my autonomy and dignity intact I am winning the war. I have also grown to accept that not everyone will like me and have learned how to protect myself from further narcissistic abuse which did repeat itself in several relationships. But now I have healthy boundaries, whereas being an unloved, scapegoated TRA child made me needy for acceptance which left me open to gaslighting and easy prey for narcissistic partners.

This devastating TRA fail has meant that 3 out of the 4 of us siblings did not have families of our own as we would certainly not want to repeat our parent's mistakes. But if there are any positive outcomes for me they are that I now have positive contact with my birth mother and half-sister; that although my birth father has passed I met him and I now have cousins, uncles and aunts in New York, Los Angeles, St Lucia and an adoptive sister in Toronto I can visit any time. Being adopted at least gave me a sense that I have a stake in society and being able to maintain a comfortable, secure home which is crucial for my sanity. *As a super empath*, having a sanctuary where I can rest and recharge, sometimes for days if necessary. In fact, my successful cleaning business, and being paid to manage my client's homes, stems from coming from a consistent (albeit unstable) family home which at least gave me a sense of being *anchored in life*.

When my adoptive parents realised they had bitten off more than they could chew with the racist abuse, instead of calling the right authorities and professionals to help us cope, they turned to religious mania, partly because there simply was not support for TRA and Mixed Race kids in rural communities in the 1980's – the Association of Black Social Workers was unheard of – but there was also a culture of “I won't say it if you don't say it” when it came to mentioning racism. Throughout British society there still is a conspiracy of silence to the extent even BAME people deny there is any racism and call whistleblowers (eg Yorkshire cricketer Azeem Rafiq) themselves racist. There is still a lot of blame-shifting, scapegoating, triangulation and denial when it comes to calling racism out and this is exactly how Nazism took a hold by the way. When I set up a BAME AA group in Soho I ended up being called a racist myself for the BAMEs only policy. I have also ended up on the receiving end of horrific homophobic gangstalking and abuse in the Black community in Brixton. Ironically the White racists of yesteryear have enabled me to deal with the Black homophobes today and I can largely rise above it and go through the proper channels, not on the basis that they are all evil and going to hell. But by persecuting LGBTs Black people are making the same mistakes as their former slave masters and hurt people hurt people. The truth is the ones gangstalking me now are jealous of my ‘success’.

So, it really has been a long solitary, arduous march having been the innocent victim of a spectacular transracial adoption fail but then I have to admit had I been raised by a birth parent I could have easily ended up on the streets of Hackney or in prison or an early grave, so at least I have beaten the odds for Mixed Race male life expectancy.

My adoptive parents hid behind religion as their source of comfort and protection, instead of actually dealing with the issues at hand, but also in a typically narcissistic way, they took the moral high ground, above the racist persecutors, which gave them the illusion of being in control when, behind the mask of being a prim and proper middle class family, the snipers and hyenas were biting at our ankles and the narcissistic family was imploding from within. Their stance was that colour is not an issue even though it was undermining the fabric of the family and causing all manner of psychosomatic symptoms such as stress, eczema, asthma, parkinsons, anxiety, night terrors, which they all blamed on me the scapegoated child. The belief that evil wicked people will be punished for eternity in hell does not deal with their bad behaviour or prevent the damage they do to others in this life, and this is why I lost faith in God and the Church because 1] God was allowing all this racial abuse and gangstalking to happen and 2] the racist bullies were getting away with it and 3] our bizarre religious house cult made things worse by further alienating us from reality

As far as the future of TRA I feel on the whole it is a good thing because there are many success stories and there are so many BAME (especially Mixed Race) children waiting for a decent placement, and I'm pretty sure the success stories outweigh the grand fails. It boils down to the assessment process which is probably more stringent and thorough re meeting the child's ethnic cultural and spiritual needs than it was 50 years ago, in spite of my adoptive parents indignation at the level of scrutiny but then a narcissist's greatest fear is exposure.

A cynical view of transracial adoption would be likening it to taking a child to a sweet shop then saying you can't have any sweets and leaving the shop empty-handed. Similarly, from a cynical perspective, giving BAME children a taste of White privilege they will not be able as adults to take so easily for granted, is kind of like a carrot on a stick. Ironically my TRA mother actually hung a picture of donkey & cart following a carrot tied to a stick over it's head and in this sense TRA gives young people of colour a taste of social status, rights and freedoms we cannot later take for granted and many find our access to these rights and privileges blocked, For example TRA adults will not find it so easy to secure top jobs & salaries, obtain large mortgages, because at some point we wake up and realise our skin colour is like a disability putting us at a disadvantage in life that our White parents never had to deal with. TRA kids need to be taught they will be judged harshly by their appearance in many situations and they will have to learn to compensate for racism, but of course if TRA parents regard racism as not an issue or turn a blind eye then how is this meeting the child's ethnic religious and cultural needs?

Anyway, I have ranted enough for now, I hope this article resonates with some of you, I think for me as a super empath I have always been a truth teller which has tended to get me into trouble, but if every TRA is singing from the same hymn sheet saying they never had any problems being TRA, then we cannot be informed and woke enough to protect and safeguard future generations from catastrophic TRA fails can we?

Paul Egbers-Kane March 2022

People in Harmony (PIH)

I joined PIH in 1994, partly as a humanities graduate & partly from soul-searching. Having been referred to as "half-caste" and "coloured" all my life, I wanted to meet and hear what other people of Mixed heritage have to say about what it means to them to be Mixed race. I grew up in a rural Hertfordshire village and I had hardly met any people of colour by the 90s, let alone Biracial or Mixed race. So, I sat in some AGMs & workshops at the PIH's premises in Slough amazed & overwhelmed hearing people chat & debate freely about how are we defining ourselves and creating our own space.

Since joining PIH 28 years ago I have attended AGMs, workshops, webinars and seminars with professional speakers and lecturers sharing their in depth research into Mixed race statistics, and found it fascinating hearing about all the new “Mixed & Other” Census categories and Mixed race being the fastest growing ethnic group in the UK. Many facts & statistics we learn in PIH conventions are fascinating & empowering although some sadly confirm our worst suspicions & show there is still a long way to go in having Mixed race recognised & respected as a unique & distinct racial / ethnic group. I have admired the defiance & stubbornness of some Mixed race individuals who insist on the right to self-define and get the best of both worlds and freely mix & mingle between racial groups, thereby claiming our true racial heritage & rights & freedoms.

There are PIH members & trustees who give talks in schools, social services, fostering & adoption and the police, all helping to raise the profile of Mixed race consciousness & awareness of the Mixed race presence in society and the benefits and contributions we make to society as well as the barriers and prejudice we are still up against from monoracial groups & individuals. From time to time we see high profile Mixed race politicians & celebrities (eg ‘Our Megan’) in the limelight and we are keen to see how they get treated as this reflects societies’ attitudes and behaviour towards Mixed race people because obviously how we are perceived by others is important as well as how we self-define.

The UK’s Mixed race population is tentatively finding its feet, its voice, and it’s place not just in the UK, US, Canada & other countries where races freely mix, but in a world that is increasingly free to travel, emigrate & intermarry. And where advertising used to reinforce racial stereotypes, is playing a big role in normalising images of interracial couples and families and pushing integration forward, in spite of the doomsters & gloomsters who claim that integration has failed, the evidence clearly shows otherwise, and you can’t argue with facts & figures! I was literally 1 year old at PIH’s inception, and just as I have played a peripheral role in PIH over the years & envision a huge & powerful organisation come 2072, so do not underestimate the potential of PIH, as it has evolved considerably over the last 50 years and it is constantly attracting new generations of curious, inquisitive & defiant Mixed race families, professionals & individuals, who all got something to say. In my time the racial landscape in the UK has changed dramatically from verbal abuse & assaults on the street, to interracial & mixed couples being so normal now, nobody bats an eyelid, albeit the HARMONY is confined to highly eclectic urban areas, but city lifestyles & attitudes are the moral compass that the towns & villages follow, and the highly Mixed urban landscapes set the tone and the flavour for the racist hillbilies to follow. In humble my opinion PIH will grow & evolve and play an important role in the rapidly evolving ethnic landscape of the UK, and its trustees all deserve MBEs, arise Dame Val...

Yours in harmony

Paul Egbers-Kane