

# Unique Perspectives on Martin Luther King Jr's Legacy

Transracial Adoption  
& Intercultural Identities

# Conversation Guidelines

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- **Content of This Talk**
  - Personal Stories & Reflections
  - Challenging Topics (Race, etc...)
- **Safe Space**
  - An open and accepting environment free from harassment

# Moral Conversation

“A conversation that is moral... is one whose conventions emphasize the fundamental worth and dignity of each participant in the exchange...”

- Be respectful of each other
- Work to find a common language
- Take conversational risks

# What Does a Family Look Like?

- **Different Definition for Everyone**
- **Identities**
  - How do you define yourself?
  - How do others define you?
  - Multiple aspects of identity
  - What is apparent / not apparent?
  - How does this apply to families?

# Transracial/Interracial Adoption

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Transracial/Interracial adoption “refers to the act of placing a child of one racial or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another racial or ethnic group.” - Wikipedia

# Panelists

- **Adoption Star**

- Zachary Fried
- Stephanie M. Shaw, M.S., C.R.C.

- **Niagara University**

- Suhieri Rodriguez
- Dr. John Sauter

# My Family & MLK



“Is he coming to our house?”

Unfortunately no, but we can listen to his words / message

# Transracial Adoption in the News

“While plenty of critics have long questioned the impact of having white parents raise black children, I have always believed that children are better off being raised in a loving home, regardless of a parent’s race, than in a home without love. But that doesn’t mean that there are no cultural gaps or learning curves that will exist for a parent raising a child of a different race.”

- Keli Goff (The Root.com)



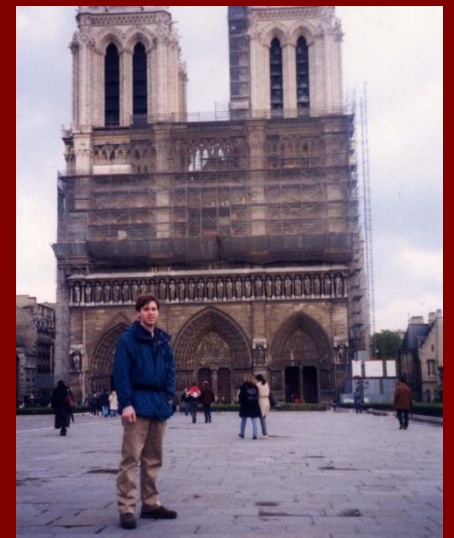
# Relevance of MLK Today

- **In the news**
  - N-Word on Instagram
  - Trayvon Martin
  - The Voting Rights Act
  - Stop & Frisk
- **The fight for equality for many causes**



# My Own Story

- **Lack of Exposure**
  - Rural New England
  - Limited understanding
- **College & Graduate School**
  - Open Mind / Study Abroad
  - AmeriCorps
  - Masters - Ally Development
  - Ph.D. - Multicultural Competence



# Conspicuous Family

- **A conspicuous family stands out**
  - Invites comments (positive & negative)
  - It is our family. We don't need validation.
- **Do you see your family on TV?**



- *Easy A* - Picture Source: IMDB



# MLK – I have a dream

“One day...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”



# MLK – I have a dream

” I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character...”



- **Growing Awareness**

- Henry has questions about skin color
- Nora notices differences but it doesn't seem to matter to her. She likes different cultures.
- **What will the future bring as they age?**

# Fears

- Fear of not responding effectively
- Concern about how our reactions may influence our children
- Self-doubt about our knowledge & skills
- Apprehension about our extended family's understanding of the issues
- How will the kids deal with situations that arise when they are on their own?





# MLK – Strength to Love

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”



# Embracing Challenges

- **Love & Respect**
- **Constantly re-learning**
- **Mistakes are ok**
- **Must take an active role**
  - Cultural learning opportunities
  - Develop Awareness, Knowledge & Skills
  - Advocacy and Support
  - Help make it part of their story





# MLK – Letter from Birmingham

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” Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. ***Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*** We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly..”

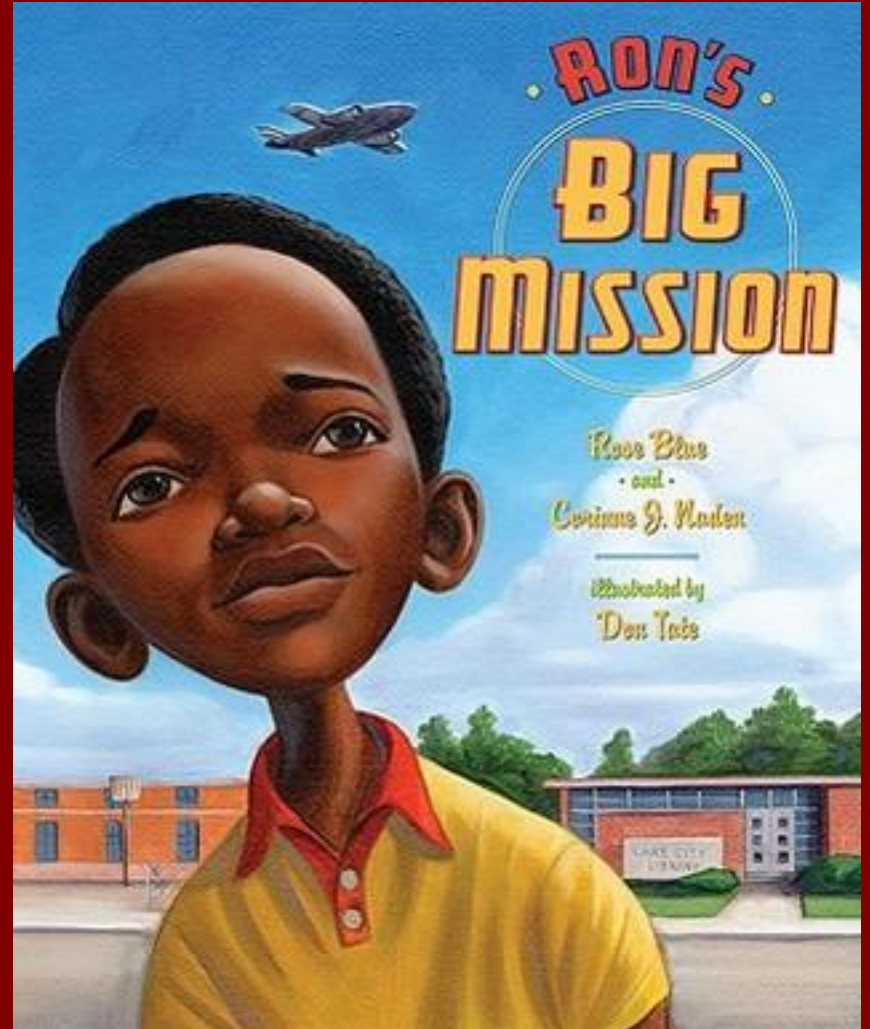
# MLK – Where Do We Go From Here

- **Language**

**“Even semantics have conspired to make that which is black seem ugly and degrading. In Roget's Thesaurus there are some 120 synonyms for blackness and at least sixty of them are offensive, such words as blot, soot, grim, devil, and foul. And there are some 134 synonyms for whiteness and all are favorable, expressed in such words as purity, cleanliness, chastity, and innocence.”**

# Our Surroundings & Narrative

- **Our Surroundings**
  - Books / Media
  - Dolls / Toys
  - Education
  - Community
- **Our Narrative**
  - How we become who we are
  - Natural part of us



- Photo from Goodreads



# Questions?



2013 Adoption Star Picnic