

Bi-racial Identity Resources for Adoptees and Families

A Narrative Storyline Approach

*Published by Korean adoptee and therapist Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC
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Several adoptees and parents have asked me about resources for navigating bi-racial identity.

“How do I navigate mixed-race identity as a transracial adoptee?”

“How do I support my child’s identity development as they make sense of their multi-racial experience?”

It can feel isolating, living in between worlds, not ever feeling a sense of connection with others around you when it comes to this aspect of your lived experience. Namely, the tension of holding multiple racialized identities in one body (e.g., your biological parents/ancestors each had different racial/ethnic backgrounds).

The following is a general mental health prompt for folks interested in pursuing this part of their story with more thought/intentionality this season:

1) Goal, Want, Desire, Need

As an adoptee, you might want to meet someone who understands what it's like to live as a bi-racial person (e.g., someone who navigates the connection to both Asian and Black or Black and White communities). There's a basic wish to be seen and understood. Loved for who you are but being able to know who that even is, and experiencing moments where you can feel the love of God (and his people) meet you in those personally specific ways. Not to idolize racial identity, but to find... understand... enjoy more of Him through it. Serve and worship, even.

2) Questions

Do other bi-racial people/adoptees exist? (yes or no) Will you meet them? (yes or no)

3) Cost

Most likely, they do exist (of course they do! yay!!). And, “it's going to cost you.” In some narrative approaches and in many mainstream storytelling arcs, there's typically a cost involved whenever a character moves closer to what they want. Watch any movie/tv show and you'll see examples throughout. And like a domino effect, the character's struggles and costs (along with their skills/abilities/maturity) grow throughout the story.

Star Wars Case Study: [SPOILERS] Luke and Obi-Wan had to pay and go through a wild chase scene with Han Solo (maybe they even had to actually pay Han Solo? I'm not sure) just to break through the atmosphere and escape Tatooine toward their mission to find Princess Leia. Right now there might be a lot of atmosphere for you as an adoptee to break through. For those just beginning to explore this, you're not exactly at a chase scene in your life yet, but maybe looking into the sunset and contemplating why you're on Tatooine in the first place. And what's the meaning of life, is there anybody out there, really just at the moment where R2D2 casts that

hologram message of Princess Leia, Luke realizes, “Hey there’s something more to this life I’m living, this planet I’m on, and the universe. But where do I even start to find it?”

Here in this vignette, Princess Leia represents that connection, maybe even an actual bi-racial adoptee/person who “gets it.” We gotta find them. And who’s the “Obi-Wan” or “Han Solo” to help you with that? And what are the barriers? (e.g., access, living in a predominately white community, available time and energy, etc.) And how much is it all going to cost? And especially after Luke loses his aunt and uncle (killed by storm troopers?), the pain and grief he encounters, Luke really has no other choice but to start this journey. It’s an inciting incident, that’s why he even takes that first step to find Obi-Wan.

Ghostbusters Case Study: [SPOILERS] The story begins in the basement of a library building. It ends with a giant marshmallow man walking through the streets of New York city, able to destroy entire buildings (and the Statue of Liberty for GBII). Again with the domino effect. We had to go through micro-steps in order to get from the basement to the rooftop (literally). What’s that going to look like for your goals, struggles, costs, and strengths. Think of an athlete, they’re no stranger to the idea of cost/benefit. They pay time and energy, and the return on that investment is clear (and can often be seen/experienced for decades to come). Now, in service of this goal, finding your self, understanding your identity, feeling bold and loved and seen as a biracial person, what kinds of time and energies would you need to practically invest in order to receive/discover/embrace and enjoy such a profound and beautiful revelation about yourself, your awesome God whose image you bear, and the potentials in your relationships that could be unlocked after walking through such a storyline...? Start small, in the basement. Sure, some form of resistance will be there, too. But so will our Redeemer [of course the illustration breaks down at some point because Christ’s presence and power will always surpass the reach of sin and suffering. There’s no match. Can’t compare. But still, start small. A simple social media video could be a great place to start].

4) Plan & Action

(among countless actions; this is a basic prompt!)

1. **Follow** and check out someone on social media, follow a hashtag like #biracial or something that connects you with folks who talk about biracial identity and adoption.
2. **Search**/Google to see if there are any bi-racial adoptee or bi-racial groups or contexts in which you could meet with others.
3. **Watch** a youtube video of a biracial adoptee sharing their story.
4. **Interact** with content that invites dialogue about identity overall. For example, I watched the Side by Side documentary section “[9 Short Stories](#)” and was then able to process themes with fellow adoptee and clinician Joy Lieberthal Rho through the [I Am Adoptee Reflections series](#). Especially naming the concept of corrective emotional experience. I wonder what that could mean for someone navigating feelings of isolation and the ways society (maybe your family, too?) responds (or not) to our questions/emotions concerning identity and the adoptee journey.
5. **Watch** [Red Table Talk episode with Angela Tucker, "Raised By White Parents: A Black Adoptee Speaks"](#) - dialogue that relates to adoptee identity - [access the discussion guide here](#).

Jesus is not held back by lineage.

He also doesn’t ignore it.

One last thing for anyone seeking to explore this in the context of Scripture. Jesus is not held back by his ancestral origin. He also doesn’t ignore it. The Gospel of Matthew seems to highlight potential affronts to his lineage. In the end it becomes his prize. It submits to his authority. Not the other way around. May it be likewise with our identity development as adoptees. And may we continue to receive all the help and tools we need to embrace such a calling.

While international transracial adoptees experience [Third Space](#) and [The Adoption Paradox](#), it's important to name how bi-racial adoptees navigate a unique narrative. We can hear directly from them and consider what it looks like to honor and support their journeys; and join together in solidarity with one another. Here are a some additional followup resources to support your independent research/study:

Cheang, J. (2020). Why Imposter Syndrome Goes Deep For Multiracial People. Mental Health America. <https://mhanational.org/blog/why-imposter-syndrome-goes-deep-multiracial-people>.

Donnella, L. (2017). 'Racial Imposter Syndrome': Here Are Your Stories. The Code Switch Podcast. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/08/462395722/racial-impostor-syndrome-here-are-your-stories>.

Mone, B. (2018). What You'll Never Understand About Being Biracial. Marie Claire. <https://www.marieclaire.com/culture/a15941992/biracial-in-america/>.

Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., Morin, R., & Lopez, M. H. (2015). Multiracial in America. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/>.

Smith, M. K., & Jarvis, J. (2021). Intro To Mixed Identity Workbook. Mixed in America. <https://www.mixedinamerica.org/free-workbook/>.

Vox First Person. (2021). The loneliness of being mixed race in America. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/first-person/21734156/kamala-harris-mixed-race-biracial-multiracial>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

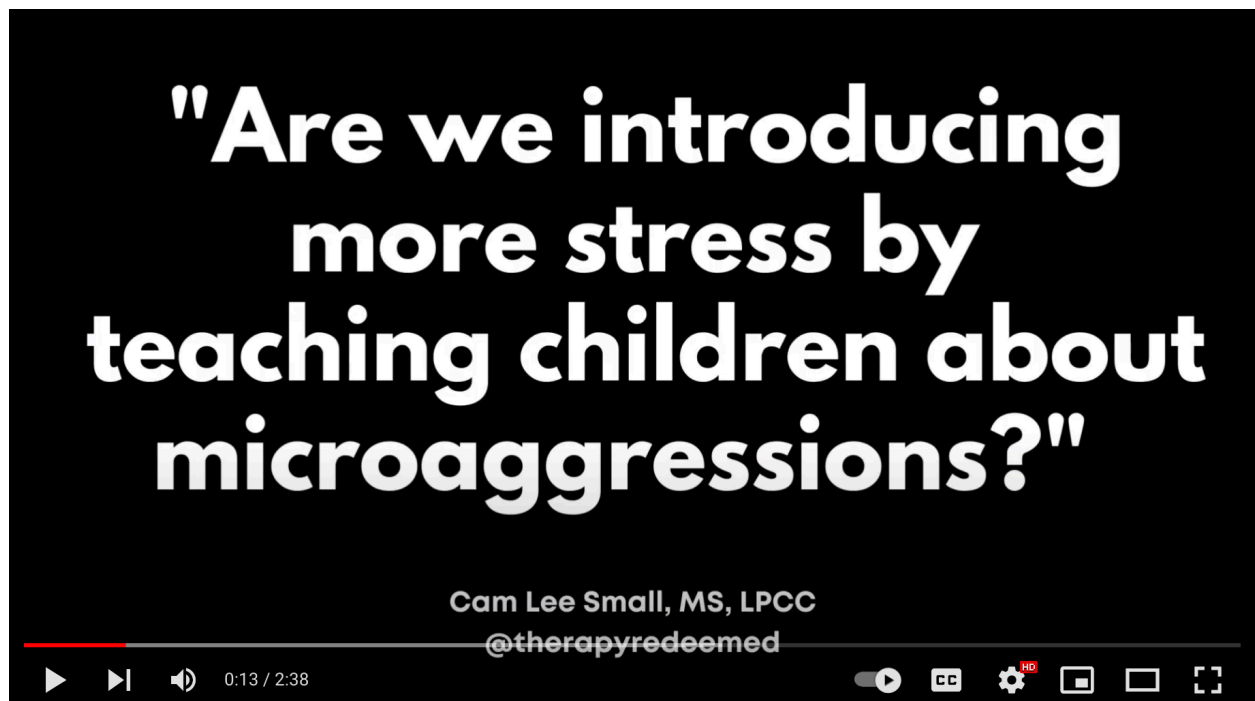
1. [Cam Addresses Adoption Trauma with CBS News](#)
2. [10 Facts about Adoptees](#)
3. [Currently accepting speaking requests for Summer and Fall 2023](#)
4. [An Ethos for Adoptee Speakers](#)
5. [Subscribe to Monthly Resource Package for important updates and exclusive support options](#)
6. [Access the January 2023 Resource Package](#)
7. ["Should we Teach Children About Microaggressions?"](#)

Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC is an international adoptee from Korea, an experience that informs and inspires his current professional work as an author and licensed professional clinical counselor. He formed his own private practice, Therapy Redeemed, in 2018, to raise awareness and respond to the mental health needs of adoptees and their families wherever they may be in their adoption journey. Cam's vision for adoptee-centered advocacy is evident through his 1:1 counseling services, live workshops and support groups, Masterclass trainings, and his active content creation/collaboration in and through various media platforms. His work has been featured in Christianity Today, National Council for Adoption, University Minnesota School of Social Work, and Center for Adoption Support and Education. He is currently working on a manuscript for a book to be released through InterVarsity Press to address the intersection of adoption, mental health, and social justice. Cam brings value and much needed perspective to the adoption community, personally and professionally.



Click image to view topics and schedule

Currently Booking for Summer/Fall 2023
[Schedule Your Event Directly with Cam Here](#)



BIO

Cam graduated from University of Madison-Wisconsin with a BS in Psychology. He then served as the adoptee summer camp director for Holt International, before earning his Master's in Counseling Psychology. After earning his clinical licensure, he self published his memoir [This is Why I Was Adopted](#) as an interactive workbook for adoptees and families to explore grief, loss, restoration and hope. He earned his [Permanency & Adoption Competency Certificate](#) through the [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#), and is partnered as a vetted clinician both with [MNAadopt](#) and the post-masters directory curated by [Training for Adoption Competency](#). Cam is trained in [biblical counseling](#), certified in [non-violent crisis intervention](#) and is a member of the [American Psychological Association's Minority Fellowship Program](#).

Cam has written adoption-informed essays for [Christianity Today](#), [National Council for Adoption](#), [University Minnesota School of Social Work](#) (p. 19), and [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#). He has also been interviewed on [podcasts/radio/video shows](#) such as Empowered to Connect, The Cha Show, Let's Grab Coffee with University of Memphis professor SunAh Marie (WYXR 91.7), The Archibald Project, The Forgotten Initiative, and Asians for Mental Health with Dr. Jenny Wang ([access all interviews here](#)).

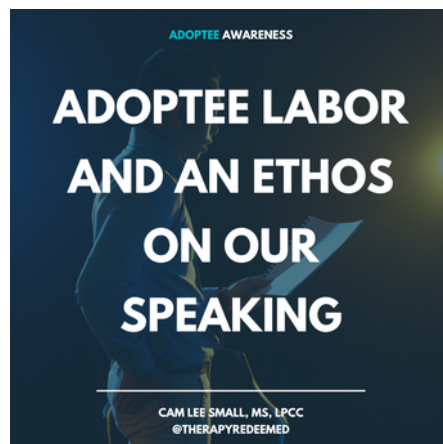
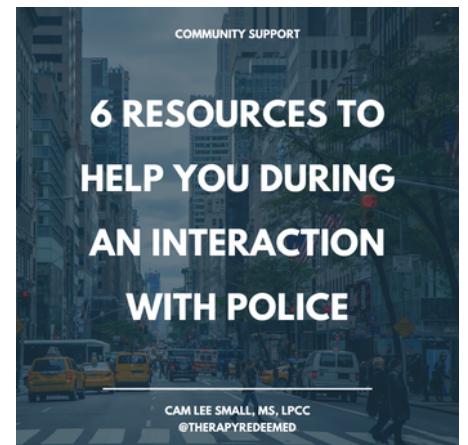
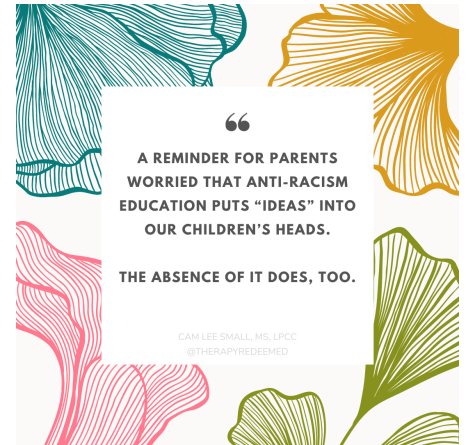
In addition to appearing on panels for [Angela Tucker \(This Adopted Life\)](#), Holt International, Catholic Charities, [Be The Bridge](#), [I Am Adoptee](#), [Expert Voices in Adoption Conference](#), and [Camp Choson](#), he has also taught and facilitated workshops and video trainings for churches, universities, and child-welfare organizations around the nation, including Children's Bureau, Replanted Ministries, Southeast Christian Church, Foster Love Project, Catalyst Foundation, United for Adoption, Korean American Adoptive Family Network, The Minnesota Society for Clinical Social Work, and Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System ([view full list and access presentations here](#)).

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN CAM



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (TAP IMAGES TO ACCESS ADDITIONAL MATERIALS)

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Services

[Letters of Recommendation](#)

[Workplace Open Forums](#) are tailor made for your team to process themes and gain tools related to AAPI and BIPOC experiences.

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[Visit the Shop for full resource catalog](#)
[including the workbook for adoptees.](#)



For questions, contact Cam
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