

Saturday, March 19, 2016

CONNECTED LIVES:
A Complex Privilege for
the Family of Adoption

22nd Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference



THE
BARKER
ADOPTION
FOUNDATION SINCE 1945
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The Barker Adoption Foundation Presents

CONNECTED LIVES: A Complex Privilege for the Family of Adoption

22nd Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference



Keynote Address:

Alison Larkin

Comedienne, Author, Barker Adoptee

Special Guest Presenter:

Rhonda M. Roorda

Author and nationally known speaker on transracial adoption

The Robin B. Allen Memorial Fund Closing Address:

Sarah Saffian

Therapist, The Modern Family Center, Spence-Chapin, New York City

...and many other distinguished speakers

Saturday, March 19, 2016

The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center
Rockville, Maryland

CONNECTED LIVES:

A Complex Privilege for the Family of Adoption

The adoption landscape today is in a state of flux. We find striking permutations on the theme of adoptive parenting and on the role of birth parents. Yet no matter how many variations or rearrangements exist, one principle grows ever clearer through the lens of rigorous clinical research and the rich findings of clinical practice: connected lives usually redound to the health of the child of adoption.

Those in what Pavao calls “the family of adoption,” namely, birth parents, adoptive parents, and the child of adoption, have connected lives, whether only in their hearts and minds and souls, or whether through real interaction. All members have unique privileges and responsibilities. The abiding tasks of parents are to love unconditionally and to prepare their children for a world in which they can flourish. As increasingly more birth parents and adoptive parents work together on behalf of a child and embrace their connected lives, they learn what adoption teaches so powerfully: that what makes a family is not only genetic ties, not racial and ethnic similarity, but a shared history of love, caring, and permanency.

The adoption ensemble that makes earnest attempts to connect and blend birth parent, child, and adoptive parent is more compelling than the lone voice. A song harder and more complex to learn, to be sure, but infinitely more beautiful and authentic in the end.

Join us Saturday, March 19, for the opportunity to:

- Hear the stories of domestic and international adoptees and the birth and adoptive parents who love them;
- Listen as birth parents share stories of integration – or attempts at integration – into adoptive families;
- Understand why race does matter in adoption and learn strategies that support healthy development in families formed through transracial adoption;
- Understand the challenges inherent in transitioning from multiple foster homes to permanency in an adoptive home, and the strategies that increase success;
- Learn ways to strengthen attachment even as the contemporary adoptive family becomes increasingly complex;
- Exchange ideas on how all members of the adoption constellation can respond to each other’s needs with empathy and respect, and view the connections as a privilege to be embraced.

Come to be Challenged and Inspired by

Alison Larkin's appearance at Barker's 2009 Annual Conference was met with great praise, and her return has been highly anticipated. Alison is an internationally acclaimed comedienne, keynote speaker, novelist, audiobook narrator, and adoptee. Adopted by British parents through the Barker Adoption Foundation and raised in England and Africa, Alison is the mother of two teenagers and the bestselling author of *The English American*. Based on the true story of her adoption by British parents and reunion with her all-American birth parents twenty-eight years later, the book grew out of Alison's hit one woman show on the subject and is currently under development to be turned into a television series. Since then she has narrated over 100 audiobooks from her recording studio in the Berkshires, Massachusetts, and in 2012 Alison won the Audiofile Earphones Award for her narration. To learn more about Alison's work, visit www.alisonlarkin.com.



Debbie Shugg has 30 years of experience working with families of at-risk youth and those with special needs. She is a Family Recruiter and Family Coach with extensive experience as Lead Parent Partner in an Adoption and Permanency Wraparound Program. She is the mother of eight children from culturally diverse backgrounds, seven of whom were adopted in sibling groups from the foster care system. Debbie and her husband also provide a safe haven and permanent connections for a number of teens and young adults, many of whom identify as LGBTQ.



Darla Henry is a social worker, trainer, teacher and consultant with extensive knowledge and experience in the child welfare field. With a mission to build a path toward healing and well-being for children, youth and families in the child welfare system, Darla established and authored the 3-5-7 Model©. Darla's doctoral research, which focused on resilience in maltreated children, provides a foundation for understanding the life experiences of children, youth and families engaged in child welfare services.



Chauncey Strong is a motivational speaker, trainer, and a committed advocate for children and families. Originally from Newark, he earned his bachelor's degree in social work from Elizabeth City State University and a master's in social work from Norfolk State University. Chauncey has dedicated his career to helping improve the outcomes of children and families involved in the child

Guest Speakers

welfare system, and he is presently a foster care supervisor with the Fairfax County Department of Family Services in Fairfax, Virginia. Chauncey is the immediate past chair of the Board of Foster Care Alumni of America. He has served on a variety of other boards, including those of the Foster Family-Based Treatment Association, and the Virginia Association of Family Preservation.



Rhonda M. Roorda was adopted into a white family and raised with two non-adopted siblings. She is a nationally known speaker on the topic of transracial adoption and a recipient of the Judge John P. Steketee Adoption Hero Award from the Adoptive Family Network (MI). With Rita J. Simon, she coauthored a landmark trilogy of books on transracial adoption: *In Their Own Voices*, *In Their Parents' Voices*, and *In Their Siblings' Voices*. Her most recent book is *In Their Own Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption*.

The book has been very well received and went into its second printing before its official release date. Ms. Roorda works as a Fund Administrator at an educational advocacy organization in Lansing, Michigan.

Sarah Saffian is an adoptee, a therapist, a writer, and a teacher. Her memoir, *Ithaka* chronicles her experience of being found by her birth family – both parents and three full siblings. Sarah teaches at the Iowa Summer Writing Festival and at Sarah Lawrence College, and works independently as a writing coach. As a therapist, she counsels individual clients and runs support groups, with Spence-Chapin Services, the Infertility and Adoption Counseling Center, and in various private practice settings in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Her clinical experience also includes New York University's Counseling and Wellness Services. Sarah earned her BA in English from Brown, her MFA in creative writing from Columbia, and her MSW from NYU. For more information about Sarah's work, visit www.saffian.com.



Barker staff presenters include:

Beverly Clarke, LCSW-C, Director, Project Wait No Longer

Sue Hollar, LCSW-C, Associate Director

Varda Makovsky, LCSW-C, Director, Family & Post Adoption Services Department

Ann Morrison, LGSW, Director, Domestic Infant Program

Marilyn Regier, Ph.D., LCSW-C, Executive Director and CEO

Barker staff bios may be found at <http://www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org/about-barker-adoption-foundation/staff>.

Program

8:15 – 8:50 Registration

9:00 – 9:15 Welcome & Introductions

Marilyn Regier

9:15 – 10:15 Alison Larkin, Keynote Address

Parenthood? Me? You've Got to be Kidding!

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:45 Breakout Session I

A. The Undeniable Power of Family

B. It's Not Just about the Cuisine

C. Embracing the Privilege of Parenting, Whether by Birth or by Adoption

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch

12:45 – 2:00 Break-out Session II

A. She's Finally Home, Now What?

B. Post Adoption Contact: I Thought it Was Going to be.....and This is What It Really Is!

C. Therapeutic Writing for the Adoption Constellation

2:00 – 2:15 Break

2:15 – 3:30 Break-Out Session III

A. 3-5-7 Model: How Foster and Adoptive Parents Create a Sense of Safety

B. In Their Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption

C. After the Reunion – What Happens Next?

3:30 – 4:30 Sarah Saffian, Robin B. Allen Memorial Closing Plenary Session

Constellation: The Adoptee's Journey Toward Wholeness

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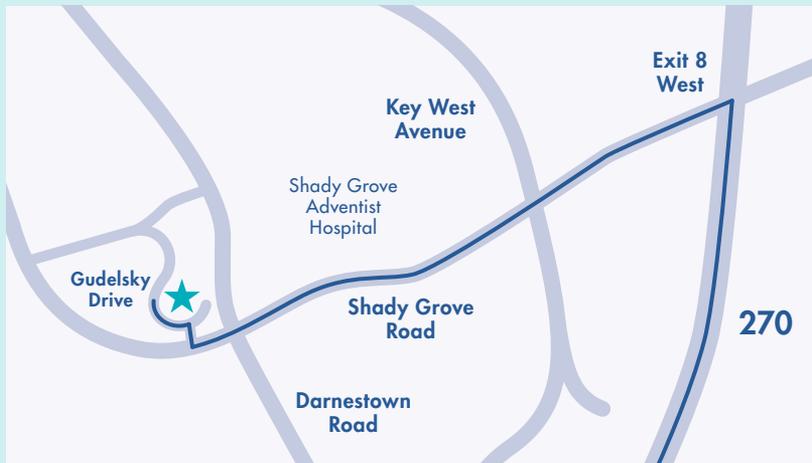
The Barker Adoption Foundation is a non-profit, comprehensive adoption agency serving all members of the adoption community – birth parents, adoptive parents, and adopted persons. For more than 70 years, Barker has provided compassionate, professional counseling and support to more than 30,000 pregnant women and placed over 7,000 children with adoptive families. In addition, Barker has a long history of innovative leadership in adoption education.

To learn more, please visit our website at www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org.

Directions to The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center

9630 Gudelsky Drive, Building I, Rockville, MD 20850

I-495 (Capital Beltway) to I-270 North, to Shady Grove Road Exit 8 (local lanes). Exit Shady Grove Road West, cross over Darnestown Road. Turn RIGHT on to Gudelsky Way. Turn LEFT on to Gudelsky Drive and proceed to Building I.





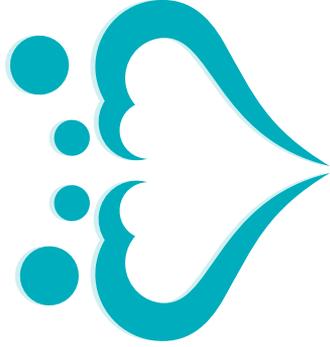
**Serving Adoptive Parents, Birth Parents
and Adopted Persons Since 1945**

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Bethesda, Maryland 20814

www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org
301-664-9664

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Registration

You may also register on-line at www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org

- Space is limited. Please register early.
- The site is wheelchair-accessible.
- CEUs available for social workers.

Contact Information:

For any special requests or questions regarding this event, please contact The Barker Adoption Foundation at **301-664-9664** or email info@barkerfoundation.org.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip code _____

Telephone _____

E-mail(s) _____

How did you learn about this conference?

Internet Brochure E-mail Facebook Other _____

Please check applicable FEE boxes below. Registration includes lunch and parking.

Early Bird: (before February 27) \$90 per person \$155 per couple \$75 per person if 3 or more staff from one agency attend

After February 27: \$110 per person \$175 per couple \$80 per person if 3 or more staff from one agency attend

Students and Young adults (18-25): \$25 per person

Earn CEUs: Check box if you need a CEU certificate

Payment: Check enclosed payable to **The Barker Adoption Foundation.**

Visa MasterCard AmEx Discover

Card number: _____ Expiration date: _____ / _____

Security code (on back of card) _____ Name on Card: _____

I am enclosing a \$ _____ tax-deductible contribution to help make adoption education available to everyone, regardless of ability to pay. Please indicate if you wish to dedicate this donation to someone connected to your life through adoption: _____

Total amount: \$ _____

Please list your choices for breakout sessions by designating A, B, or C:

Breakout Session I: _____ Breakout Session II: _____ Breakout Session III: _____

Check box if you request ASL interpretation for select sessions. Requests must be received by February 19.

Check any of the following that apply:

Birth Parent Adoptive Parent Prospective Parent Adopted Person
 Foster Parent Grandparent Adoption Professional Therapist
 Educator Adoption Attorney First-time conference attendee Other _____

Mail your registration to:

The Barker Adoption Foundation/Conference Registration
7979 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

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70 YEARS OF SERVICE

Breakout Session Summaries



I A. The Undeniable Power of Family

Youth adopted from foster care may reject or portray indifference towards their adoptive families. This can leave adoptive parents feeling inadequate and ineffective as they seek to provide love and support to their child. As adults, however, many of these youth note that while they may not have always felt grateful for their adoptive families, the love and acceptance they received had an immeasurable impact on their success. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the importance of permanency for a child, the power of adoptive and biological connections, and a renewed hope for the long-term impact they can have on their children. Panel of Adoptees including Chauncey Strong. Moderator: Beverly Clarke

I B. It's Not Just About the Cuisine

You purchased the artwork, displayed the pottery, attend cultural festivals, and frequently go out to eat at restaurants that serve food from your child's culture. But is that enough? A panel of adoptive parents will share the efforts they continue to make to authentically celebrate the multi-cultural family they have created through adoption. Moderator: Sue Hollar

I C. Embracing the Privilege of Parenting, Whether by Birth or by Adoption

Birth parents and the children they place for adoption may never meet – or may only infrequently interact – or may have open and enduring contact. Birth mothers, birth fathers, adoptive parents, and adoptees reflect on the powerful healing and normalizing that may occur when *real* relationships, rather than fantasized interactions, characterize their lives. This presents a unique set of parenting challenges, but ones that will be presented as privileges to be embraced rather than feared. Moderator: Marilyn Regier

II A. She's Finally Home, Now What?

The build-up to placement of a child who has experienced trauma and loss can sometimes be more exciting than the realities of becoming a family. This workshop, led by an adoption professional and mother of eight (seven of whom were adopted from foster care), will explore what families may experience after their children come home. Participants will gain tools and ideas about services that may make adjustment from a “waiting” parent, to “parenting” parent, much easier. The session is recommended for those considering and/or already parenting children adopted at an older age. Presenter: Debbie Schugg

II B. Post Adoption Contact: I Thought it Was Going to be.....and This is What It Really Is!

Before placement, prospective adoptive parents learn about the importance and explore their openness to their child's ongoing relationship with their birth family. Despite careful consideration, planning, and creation of post-adoption contracts, these relationships are typically different from how they are envisioned. This difference

is rarely “worse” than planned and is more typically much better or richer than anticipated. Three families will share their experiences in post adoption relationships, reflecting on how the relationships have evolved over time. Moderator: Ann Morrison

II C. Therapeutic Writing for the Adoption Constellation

Being a member of the adoption constellation – adoptee, birth parent, adoptive parent – can sometimes be hard to wrap your head and heart around. Putting words to complex and amorphous thoughts and feelings can be challenging. In this integrated group, we'll explore our internal experiences around adoption through short writing exercises – such as a letter to your child or your child's birth parent, or an imagining of your reunion or visit to your host country – complemented by discussion and optional sharing (submitting your writing and reading aloud are not required). You will have an opportunity to explore these issues with other members of the constellation, and learn from one another's varying experiences, perspectives, and wisdom. Presenter: Sarah Saffian

III A. 3-5-7 Model: How Foster and Adoptive Parents Create a Sense of Safety

Children who are in the foster care system or who were adopted at an older age often express their losses through behaviors. Using concepts of the 3-5-7 Model[©], the author will explore skills participants can use to help children and youth grieve their losses. Participants will take a “journey” through the experience of a grieving child to learn more about the impact of loss from the child's perspective. Most of all, participants will hear that grief is not a pathology and that survival behaviors can change when children and youth in grief are comforted. Presenter: Darla L. Henry

III B. In Their Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption

This presentation focuses on a subject too seldom explored: what black Americans think about transracial adoption. Rhonda Roorda, adopted into a white family, will discuss findings from her recently published book: *In Their Voices: Black Americans on Transracial Adoption*. She will explore topics including: how adoptive parents who have never been part of a minority culture can best help their transracially adopted child to recognize, reject, and deal with racism, and the types of support networks white parents need to have in place when they adopt black and biracial children. Presenter: Rhonda Roorda

III C. After the Reunion – What happens next?

Reuniting with birth family is a unique, uncharted process. Many who search and are able to reunite discover that the initial meeting is often the easiest part. Navigating and developing these new relationships, and trying to determine where and how they “fit” into the context of one's life is more challenging. Adoptees who have reconnected with birth family will share their perspectives on their birth and adoptive family relationships and the impact that the reunion has had. Moderator: Varda Makovsky