Navigating the Challenges and Growing Stronger

The 24th Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference
Saturday, March 17, 2018
The Barker Adoption Foundation Presents

ADOPTION: Navigating the Challenges and Growing Stronger

The 24th Annual Adoption and Foster Care Conference

Keynote Address:
Angela Tucker

Closing Address:
Chauncey Strong
MSW, LGSW

Saturday, March 17, 2018
The Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center
Rockville, Maryland

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Challenges are learning opportunities. Those who have created successful movements, organizations, businesses, and works of art and literature nearly always went through a time of one or more setbacks. But those weren’t failures: they were avenues for learning about what worked and what didn’t. And that understanding brought resilience that served them when they tried again.

Adoptive parents, birth parents, and adopted children sometimes run up against a unique set of challenges. Adopted children sometimes feel less than secure in their families. They may struggle to develop an identity without complete information about their background. They can face academic challenges. Birth parents sometimes wonder how to navigate a relationship with the adoptive family. They may worry that their child will not understand or will forever judge their courageous decisions. Adoptive parents may feel that they have to be perfect. They may worry about where to find guidance and resources.

No one needs to be alone in taking on these issues. Join us on Saturday, March 17th to learn skills and get insights from professionals, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees that will help adoptive parents, adopted children, birth parents, and others understand how to take advantage of the unique opportunities that adoption provides and how to navigate common challenges:

- Learn positive strategies for supporting adopted children in improving behavior while promoting healing and strengthening attachment.
- Get insights from adult adoptees on when and how to share information with adopted children about their stories.
- Hear from adoptive parents about how to tackle the initial and unexpected challenges facing families after an adoption is finalized.
- Understand what it means for international adoptees to be immigrants in the current political climate.
- Hear from adoptive parents about the impact of therapy.
- Learn from the experiences of adoptees and birth parents with the search and reunion process.
- Explore the race and culture issues involved in parenting across race.
- Learn how to balance the need for more information in many intercountry adoptions and the reality that such adoptions sometimes involve a leap of faith.
- Better understand how to advocate for your child’s educational needs.
- Hear from adult adoptees about how to develop an identity in the absence of complete information about one’s past.
- Understand the perspective of birth parents on the adoption experience.
- Learn more about the roots of an adopted child’s behavior using a trauma-informed lens.
Guest Speakers

**Angela Tucker** is a nationally recognized thought leader on transracial adoption and is an advocate for adoptee rights. In 2013 when she was 26, Angela's own story of adoption and her search for her birth parents was featured in the groundbreaking documentary CLOSURE.

In 2009, Angela started the blog The Adopted Life (www.theadoptedlife.com) as a place to publicly process her emotions and experience as a transracial adoptee. Through the blog, she hoped to build a community of other adoptees growing up in closed adoptions. The Adopted Life has since grown in readership and purview and is now the name and platform for The Adopted Life miniseries. Angela's work has turned her into a sought-after keynote speaker for adoption and child welfare-based organizations. The news site The Seattle Globalist recently included her in its "Seattle's Smartest Global Women" designation.

Elements of her story have also been featured on CNN's Anderson Cooper 360, Huffington Post, and the Washington Post. Angela currently serves on the Leadership Team of the Adoption Museum Project and works as the Post-Adoption Program Manager at Amara, where she is building an adoptee mentorship program, complete with an adoptee-only social network.

**Chauncey Strong**, MSW, LGSW, originally from Newark, New Jersey, earned his BA degree in Social Work from Elizabeth City State University in Elizabeth City, North Carolina in 1991 and his MSW from Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia in 1993.

Chauncey is a child welfare advocate with 25 years of extensive experience in child welfare administration in the private and public sector and specializes in foster care and adoption training and consulting. Most recently he worked for eight years as a foster care supervisor with Fairfax County Department of Family Services in Fairfax, Virginia. He has also worked as an administrator, manager, supervisor, child welfare worker, mentor, and community organizer.

Chauncey is the Executive Director of Strong Training and Consulting, LLC, where he provides training and consulting in child welfare. He is currently consulting with The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Capacity Building Center for States, and The Virginia Department of Social Services.

Chauncey has served on several national boards and committees and is a motivational speaker and committed advocate for children and families. He has dedicated his career to helping improve the outcomes of children and families involved in the child welfare system.

**Aselefech Evans** was adopted from Ethiopia along with her twin sister in 1994 at six years old and is the Equity and Inclusion Program Coordinator for Cross Cultural Health Care Programs (CCHCP) in Seattle. CCHCP works to promote cultural competency within the medical community for immigrants and refugees. Aselefech has been an active voice in the adult adoptee community for years. She is a co-founder of Ethiopian Adoptees of the Diaspora, a vibrant Facebook group. She has presented at many heritage camps on topics such as transracial adoption, adoptee identity formation, racism, black hair care, and her reunion with her Ethiopian family. She was a columnist for Gazillion Adoptees online magazine and is a columnist for Lost Daughters, a writing collective of women adopted and fostered as children from the United States and internationally.

**Maureen McCauley** worked in adoption advocacy for many years, including as executive director for the Joint Council on International Children's Services and as interim executive director of The Barker Adoption Foundation. She is the parent through adoption of four children who are now...
young adults: sons adopted as babies in the U.S. and twin daughters adopted from Ethiopia when they were six years old. She was a columnist for Gazillion Adoptees online magazine and has written extensively on adoption issues. She wrote an article for Slate on Adam Crapser, the Korean adoptee deported to South Korea in 2016 and has had articles featured in Catapult, Adoption Today, and Focus on Adoption (Canada’s only adoption magazine), among others. Maureen serves on the Post-Adoption Advisory Board of Amara, a foster care agency in Seattle, where she lives and works as a writer, editor, and artist. She blogs at LightofDayStories.com.

Maureen and Aselefech Evans are two of the editors of an upcoming anthology by Ethiopian adoptees titled Lions Roaring, Far From Home.

Debbie Schugg has 30 years of experience working with families of at-risk youth and those with special needs. She has extensive experience offering individualized, trauma-informed coaching to adoptive families in crisis and training professionals who work with adoptive families throughout the nation. Deb is a Family Coach and Trainer at Kinship Center and a Senior Consultant with the National Center on Adoption and Permanency.

Deb is the mother of 8 children from culturally diverse backgrounds, 7 of whom were adopted as part of sibling groups from the foster care system. She and her husband also provide a safe haven and permanent connections for a number of teens and young adults, many of whom are Deaf and identify as LGBTQ.

Rich Weinfeld is Director and Founder of Weinfeld Education Group (WEG), LLC, a group of 50 educational consultants, psychologists, and a variety of other providers of related student services dedicated to helping all students reach their potential. Rich’s 30-year career with Montgomery County Maryland Public Schools (MCPS) provided him with the experience and knowledge that he uses today in his work advocating and providing expert witness services. He began his career teaching elementary school for four years, which he describes as his most challenging role. Next, Rich spent 14 years working with emotionally disturbed students and 6 years directing a program for students with learning disabilities, physical challenges, and autism spectrum disorders. His career in MCPS culminated with 6 years as the director of programs for gifted students with disabilities. He is the co-author of six books and many articles on a variety of special-needs topics. Rich has taught a course on Gifted Students with Disabilities at Johns Hopkins, provided training for professional and parent groups, and hosted an internet radio program about “hot topics” in education.

Lisa Ellsbury has been married for 33 years to her physician husband and high school sweetheart. Together they have 16 children, 14 of whom have or had special needs. They have adopted once domestically and 10 times internationally through the China adoption program. Lisa is a stay-at-home mother who has the privilege of homeschooling their children. Lisa serves on the board of directors for the Love Without Boundaries Foundation, which provides hope and healing to orphaned and vulnerable children in Asia and Africa and shares her family’s personal story on her blog, Seriously Blessed.

Barker staff presenters include:

Susan Hollar, LCSW-C, LICSW, Executive Director & CEO
Beverly Clarke, LCSW-C, LICSW, Senior Clinical Director of Adoption Programs
Lisa Hughes, LCSW-C, LICSW, International Clinical & Family Support Specialist
Keltie Hawkins, LGSW, Contracted Social Worker and Birth Parent Group Facilitator
Kate Simpson, LGSW, Clinical Specialist
Varda Makovsky, LCSW-C, LICSW, Director, Family & Post Adoption Services Department

Barker staff bios may be found at http://www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org/about-us/staff
8:15–8:50  Registration, Continental Breakfast, Book and Community Resource Browsing

9:00–9:15  Welcome & Introductions
Susan Hollar

9:15–10:15  Angela Tucker, Keynote Address
Nevertheless She Persisted

10:15–10:30  Break

10:30–11:45  Breakout Session I
A. Why Discipline and Punishment Have Nothing in Common
B. Telling Difficult Adoption Stories
C. Blues, Bonding, and Building a Village
D. International Adoptees Are Immigrants: A Cause for Celebration, Deportation, and More

11:45–12:45  Lunch

12:45–2:00  Break-out Session II
A. Therapy: Is It Really Worth It?
B. Navigating Search and Reunion: Differing Outcomes and Perspectives
C. Parenting Across Race
D. Unpredictability and Taking a Leap of Faith

2:00–2:15  Break

2:15–3:30  Break-Out Session III
A. Advocating for Your Child’s Special Educational Needs
B. Developing Your Identity When You Don’t Have All of the Pieces
C. Understanding the Birth Parent Experience
D. Understanding Trauma and Creating Opportunities for Healing

3:40–4:30  Chauncey Strong, Closing Address
Using Challenges and Strengths to Move Forward and Grow Stronger!
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 7,500 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.

Join our online community:

Facebook: @barkeradoptions
Instagram: @barkeradoptions
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Facility Map and Parking Directions:

Facility map and parking directions can be found at www.shadygrove.umd.edu/conference-center. Onsite parking is available in the Traville Gateway Garage for 5 dollars a day.
ADOPTION:
Navigating the Challenges and Growing Stronger

Saturday, March 17, 2018
### Registration

- 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.

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<th>Early Bird: (before March 7)</th>
<th>After March 7:</th>
<th>Students and Young Adults (18–25):</th>
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**Earn CEUs:**

[ ] Check box if you need a CEU certificate

### Payment:

- [ ] 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, C, or D:

- Breakout Session I: ______
- Breakout Session II: ______
- Breakout Session III: ______

### Check any of the following that apply:

- [ ] Birth Parent
- [ ] Foster Parent
- [ ] Educator
- [ ] Adoptive Parent
- [ ] Grandparent
- [ ] Adoption Attorney
- [ ] Prospective Parent
- [ ] Adoption Professional
- [ ] First-time Conference Attendee
- [ ] Adopted Person
- [ ] Therapist
- [ ] Other __________

### Mail your registration to:

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

You may also register on-line at [www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org](http://www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org)
I A. Why Discipline and Punishment Have Nothing in Common
While both discipline and punishment can be used to address behavior, they are worlds apart in purpose, implementation, and outcomes. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the differences between the two and why using traditional parenting with children who have experienced trauma often exacerbates behavior and strains relationships. You will come away from this workshop with tools for refining your parenting philosophy and strategies you can use today to promote healing, strengthen attachment, and improve behavior. Presenter: Debbie Schugg

I B. Telling Difficult Adoption Stories
Every adopted person has their own unique personal background and adoption story. Adoptive parents often struggle to know what information about their child’s story they should share with them – and when – and how to do so in an age-appropriate manner. A panel of adult adoptees will discuss how and when they learned critical aspects of their adoption stories and will share how the process and transmission of this information affected their personal identity, self-perception, and family relationships. Moderator: Varda Makovsky

I C. Blues, Bonding, and Building a Village
During the waiting process, prospective adoptive parents are typically focused on being matched, preparing to welcome their child into the family, and addressing the legal aspects of the adoption. With all the preparation surrounding these milestones, parents are often surprised by other initial challenges, including navigating overly personal questions from friends, family, and strangers; forming an attachment after placement; and building a community of support for themselves and their child. A panel of adoptive parents will offer insight and concrete ideas to add to your adoptive parent tool kit. Moderator: Kate Simpson

I D. International Adoptees Are Immigrants: A Cause for Celebration, Deportation, and More
Because international adoptees are assimilated deeply into their American families, many people forget that adoptees are immigrants. Aselefech Evans, co-founder of Ethiopian Adoptees of the Diaspora, will discuss how immigration policies affect international adoptees in terms of identity, self-worth, and sense of inclusion in America. What does it mean to be a person of color, an immigrant, and an adoptee in our current political climate? What are the complications of citizenship for international adoptees, legally and emotionally? How can adoptive parents best prepare their children for the challenges of their immigrant identity and more as international adoptees grow up? Presenters: Aselefech Evans and Maureen McCauley

II A. Therapy: Is It Really Worth It?
With work, school, homework, sports, music lessons, and all of the other activities that make life busy, parents might wonder whether following up on their plan to see a therapist is really worth the time and cost of fitting one more thing into the schedule. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from a panel of adoptive parents who effectively used various therapists as a support resource. Attendees will hear more about the impact that a good therapist can have on a family. Moderator: Beverly Clarke

II B. Navigating Search and Reunion: Differing Outcomes and Perspectives
Every search and reunion process is different and follows its own unique path. Some end abruptly in “dead-ends” when relatives wish for no contact, while others result in happy reunions and lasting ties. Most reunions fall somewhere in between, with both parties seeking to define what their roles and relationship will be in both the short term and long term. Regardless of the outcome, engaging in a reunion typically involves challenges and emotional highs and lows. This panel, including adult adoptees and a birth parent, will discuss their markedly different experiences and outcomes in the search/reunion process and the effect search/reunion has had on their lives. Moderator: Varda Makovsky

II C. Parenting Across Race
Adopting transracially requires that adoptive parents give attention to and have ongoing discussions about race and culture. A prerequisite to these activities is a willingness to reflect on one’s own privilege, to understand and identify examples of colorism, to have knowledge about how stereotypes inform implicit bias, and to deal with how those biases impact familial and societal interactions. Participants gain a deeper understanding of the responsibility of parenting transracially, increase their awareness about the difference between intent and impact, and develop strategies for identifying and curbing micro-aggressions. Presenter: Angela Tucker

II D. Unpredictability and Taking a Leap of Faith
Taking a “leap of faith” is an expression that many families can relate to when considering intercountry adoption. Adoptive families know that they must be prepared for the likelihood of an adoption case file or referral having incomplete or missing information. But not having enough details can understandably make a parent feel unsettled and unprepared to provide love and support to a child. After this session, participants will better understand how to balance making an informed decision and taking a leap of faith. Presenter: Lisa Ellsby

III A. Advocating for Your Child’s Special Educational Needs
Parents of children with special needs often face obstacles in ensuring that their children have access to the educational services required for them to reach their full academic potential. This session will teach participants when to seek an evaluation for a child’s educational needs, how to work with a school system to develop and implement an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, how to partner with the school, how to advocate effectively to ensure that required services are provided, and what actions to take if they believe their children are not receiving appropriate support services in their current education framework. Presenter: Rich Weinfeld

III B. Developing Your Identity When You Don’t Have All of the Pieces
Identity formation is like putting together a puzzle. Without all the pieces available, it can prove challenging to form and understand the whole picture. Yet many adopted persons do not have access to information about their biological family or their first years of life. A panel of adult adoptees will discuss their journey, including how they “put together the pieces” and gained a better sense of self despite having only limited information. Moderator: Lisa Hughes

III C. Understanding the Birth Parent Experience
The journey that leads a birth parent to choose adoption is one that is unique and brave. Adoptive parents may feel uncertain about their level of comfort knowing and sharing the story of a birth parent with their child. Better understanding the adoption experience of a child’s birth parent can enrich the connection you have with your child and help build a bridge to connect you and your child with their birth family. A panel of birth parents will share their personal stories and their individual experiences in choosing adoption. Moderator: Keltie Hawkins

III D. Understanding Trauma and Creating Opportunities for Healing
When a child with a history of trauma joins a family, behavior can leave parents perplexed, frustrated, and exhausted. Sabotaging, lying, and stealing don’t seem to make sense, and it may appear that the child doesn’t care, doesn’t try, or maybe doesn’t even want to be in the family. Through a trauma-informed lens, we can look at the behavior from the inside, addressing the underlying needs and bringing about real change. By understanding the roots of your child’s behavior, you can parent in ways that help your child heal and your family thrive. Presenter: Debbie Schugg