Keynote Speaker

Holly van Gulden is co-author of *Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child*, and *The Dance of Attachment*. Since 1985, Holly van Gulden has been training adoptive and foster parents and professionals throughout the United States, England, Scotland and Canada. In addition, for over fifteen years, Holly has co-directed Adoptive Family Counseling Center. Holly earned her B.S. from the University of Chicago and is completing her Master’s Thesis for St. Mary’s University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Holly is herself an adoptive parent she grew up in a multi-racial, international family comprised of six children born to the family, four adopted children and several foster brothers and sisters.

Workshop Presenters & Facilitators

**Laura Anderson,** Psy.D has been a licensed clinical psychologist working with children, adolescents and families for 17 years. Much of her work has been in school settings and included frequent involvement of the care of adopted children and children in the foster care setting. She is also an adoptive parent.

**Kathy Bargar,** LCSW earned her undergraduate and Master’s degrees in Social Work from the University of Southern California. Her early career focused on trauma recovery for survivors of sexual assault. She later began focusing on service delivery model development for prospective adoptive parents. Kathy currently serves as the Social Work Supervisor at Across the World Adoptions. She is an adjunct lecturer for the USC School of Social Work and her current research focuses on post adoption contact and adjustment. Kathy is an adoptive mother to a daughter from China and recently began the search for her own biological grandparents.

**Patricia E. Black,** JD has been a child welfare attorney for over two decades; has represented hundreds of children in child abuse, neglect and custody litigation in San Francisco county. Trish is concerned by the lack of quality legal representation in special education proceedings for foster children and, Trish has added Special Education proceedings to her legal expertise and is a graduate of the Institute for Special Education Advocacy at William & Mary Law School. Trish is a Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist, accredited by the State Bar of California, Board of Legal Specialization and the American Bar Association.

**Lisa Clark,** LCSW is the Executive Director of Adopt International, a domestic and international agency. She has worked in the field of adoption for over 16 years, primarily working with expectant parents. Lately, she has been putting a lot of her energy into Adopt’s Post Adoption program that aims to normalize and support families years after placement. She is a member of a transracial adoptive family.
Workshop Presenters & Facilitators

**Toni Brown, MS** has been in the field of foster care and adoption for eight years, initially assisting families with placement and home study completions. The last four years have been focused on post-adoption services including: support counseling, support groups, crisis intervention, parent training, community/professional training and helping families implement attachment based interventions.

**Jill Dziko, LCSW** has a Masters of Social Work and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Washington State. She has worked in the field of adoption for over 14 years and is Certified in Trauma-Attachment focused therapy as well as Therapy with Adoptive and Foster Families. She provides homestudy and post-placement services for adoptive families in addition to a private therapy practice where she works with adoptive and foster families and children.

**Jemma Elliot, LPCC, LMFT** is the Director of Research for the M.A. Counseling Psychology Program at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara. She additionally serves as a Research Associate and Thesis Advisor, as well as in a faculty role, teaching both research and clinical courses in the program. Jemma, an adult adoptee, has a clinical focus on adoption and separation trauma, and has provided trainings to advance the understanding of the needs of children and families on the adoption spectrum throughout Los Angeles County. Clinically, she has worked specifically with clients around the lifelong issues of adoption for the past eight years, both in private practice and in the APSS Program.

**Beth Hall** is the white adoptive mother of a Latina daughter and an African American son, now adults, and grew up with an adopted sister. She is the Executive Director of Pact, an Adoption Alliance which she co-founded in 1991 to combat the discrimination she witnessed against adopted children of color and their birth families. She is the co-author, with Gail Steinberg, of the book Inside Transracial Adoption. She is a nationally known advocate for adopted children of color who regularly lectures and leads workshops on ethical, non-racist adoption practices. In 2010 she received the Outstanding Practitioner in Adoption Award from the Adoption Initiative at St. John’s University.

**Rachel Herndon, LCSW** is a psychiatric case manager at Kaiser for patients with complex mental health and medical conditions. Until recently she was the Director of Birth Parent services at Adoption Connection and provided supportive, accurate and empowering services to women across the range of pregnancy options and helped coordinate matches between adoptive and birth parents if they choose adoption. Rachel loves leading workshops and support groups that can help build emotional connections and self worth. She is also passionate about building bridges with organizations in the women’s reproductive justice field. Previously, Rachel worked as a Child Protective Services emergency response social worker and as a medical social worker.
**Workshop Presenters & Facilitators**

**JulieAnn Jones, MSW** has spent the last 20 years working in the field of adoption and foster care. The last 3 years have been focused on post-adoption services including: support counseling, support groups, crisis intervention, parent training, community/professional training, community referrals and helping families implement attachment based interventions. She also teaches as an adjunct professor at the local community college and as an instructor for the Foster and Kinship Care Education Program. JulieAnn is a TBRI practitioner, an adoptive mama and former foster parent.

**Susan Dusza Guerra Leksander, LMFT** is a first mother, transracial adoptee, and a licensed psychotherapist who has provided services to all members of the adoption / foster care constellation since 2008 in agency and private practice settings. She is the First/Birth Family Specialist at Pact, an Adoption Alliance. Susan placed her daughter for adoption in 2001 in an “open” adoption which was subsequently closed by her daughter’s adoptive parents. She was transracially adopted as an infant and reunited with her first families as a teenager. Susan is currently on the Adoption Museum Project’s Leadership Team and was Board President of On Your Feet Foundation for three years.

**Ronald Mah, LMFT, Ph.D** has extensive experience as a therapist with adoptive, foster, and blended families. He is also trainer and consultant to foster care agencies.

**Tara Noone, MSW** built her family through open adoption with the help of Adoption Connection in 2008. A strong advocate for open adoption, Tara is excited to work formally with the adoption agency in her role as the Director of Adoptive Parent Services, to help adoptive families and birth families build community together around adopted children. Tara has extensive experience in training, supervision, and outreach in a social work setting and in direct case management experience in prenatal health. She finds particular inspiration in knowing that every adoption story is exceptional and in contributing to the match by finding the right outcome for families.

**Malaika Parker** is the Family of Color Specialist at Pact, an Adoption Alliance, where she works with adoptive parents of color (and their parenting partners) to design resources and create community for same-race adoptive families. As an African American adoptive parent, she understands how hard-and important-it is for same-race adoptive parents to find resources that apply to their own family dynamics as opposed to those that apply to transracial families.
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**Adam Pertman**, President of the National Center on Adoption and Permanency, is one of the leading U.S. experts on adoption and child welfare. Previously, he led the Donaldson Adoption Institute and was Associate Editor of the scholarly journal Adoption Quarterly. He is a widely published author of research, articles and books, including “Adoption Nation,” reviewed as “the most important book every written on the subject.” He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his writing about adoption as a journalist at the Boston Globe. He has received numerous honors for his work, most recently a 2016 Adoption Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Janet Shirley** is an adoption professional who has served families and children for over 25 years. She brings valuable personal insight as part of a transracial family and has assisted hundreds of families in all aspects of the adoption process.

**Lawrence Siegel, JD** has been an adoption attorney for 30+ years and a special education attorney for 38 years; has written and helped enact special education law, appointed to Cal. Sp. Ed. Commission; Fulbright Scholar; has presented to parents of special education children throughout the nation; testified before US Congress and various state legislatures; author The Complete IEP Guide, Least Restrictive Environment, The Human Right to Language; endowed chair, Gallaudet University.

**Charlie Spiegel, JD** has a San Francisco law practice that includes prenuptial planning, divorce and custody mediation, adoption, surrogacy and real estate matters. Charlie served as Co-Chair of the National Board of Lambda Legal, and was a founding Executive Director of Our Family, the Bay Area’s LGBT family organization. He served on the Board of Directors for KidsTurn.org and Collaborative Practice California; and now serves on the Board of CPSF.com. Charlie received a Fammy award from San Francisco’s Jewish Family & Children’s Services in 2009 for his advocacy for families. He has lived and raised his family in the SF Bay Area since 1989.

**Gail Steinberg**, co-founder and executive director emeritus of Pact, An Adoption Alliance, is the adoptive mom of four grown daughters and sons all currently in their 40s. Her multiracial family has Korean/Native American, African American and white members. She is co-author, with Beth Hall, of Inside Transracial Adoption, which is filled with personal stories, practical suggestions, and delivers the message that race matters and families built transracially can develop strong and binding ties. Gail has amazing vision and passion and was the drive behind the engine that drove Pact in the early years. More recently she has run support groups for adoptive parents of adopted adults and older teens.
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**Katie Stickles-Wynen, MSW**, transracial/international adoptee has a Masters in Social Work. During graduate school Katie studied under Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao in Boston before moving to Oakland and joining the Pact staff. At Pact Katie works with pre-adoptive and adoptive parents, leads groups and works with the t(w)eens. Katie has worked with the adoption community since 2006. One-on-one and in group settings, Katie has worked with adoptees ranging from age 5-55 and draws on her own experience as an adoptee to create a safe space to connect, share and explore feelings around adoption and race.

**Dan Thorne, LMFT** is the Founder of PRAXES, a parenting practice designed to reduce stress for parents of children with mental health, intellectual, and/or physical challenges. He has forty years of behavioral health experience as therapist, administrative and/or clinical director of behavioral health programs in Southern California.

**Theresa Vitt** is an adoptee who was born in Utah, raised in Northern California, and has been reunited with her first family since 2012. Since 2014 she has been a member of the PACER Board of Directors and am honored to be serving as President. Her passions are to empower the adoptee voice, provide support for members of the adoption constellation, grant identity equality to all adopted people, and to educate the public about the complexity of adoption. She and her husband have 2 grown children and she is happily retired from a long career in the biopharmaceutical industry.

**Abby Williams, MSW** is a social worker with Family Builders by Adoption, a fost-Adopt agency in Oakland where she has worked for 10 years. She has worked in all aspects of Child Protective Services including recruiting, training, assessing and supporting foster parents. She is the parent of one child.

**Kerry Woodward, PhD** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at California State University, Long Beach. Her work focuses on the intersections of race, class, and gender. While most of her research has focused on welfare policy and its implementation, her publications include “Marketing Black Babies versus Recruiting Black Families: The Racialized Strategies Private Adoption Agencies Use to Find Homes for Black Babies” (Sociology of Race and Ethnicity 2016). Kerry and her partner are transracial adoptive parents to two daughters (ages 9 and 12), both of whom were adopted with the help of Pact: An Adoption Alliance. Kerry is involved with Kaleidoscope, a Southern California affiliate of Pact.