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CALIFORNIA ADOPTION CONFERENCE

2021 Keynote Speakers



Sharon Kaplan Roszia, M.S., is an internationally known trainer and author who helped pave the way for open adoption practice believing in keeping connections over time. She has been devoted to her work in adoption and foster care since 1963 and is also a parent by birth, adoption, and foster care. She has co-authored two books on open adoption, *The Open Adoption Experience* and *Cooperative Adoption* and most recently released her third book, *Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency*. She is co-author and master trainer of Kinship Center's ACT: An Adoption and Permanency Curriculum for Child Welfare and Mental Health Professionals. Sharon is a consultant for the National Center on Adoption and Permanency, lectures nationally and still sees clients.



Bryan Post, Ph.D. in Social Work, is a child behavior expert and founder of the Post Institute for Family-Centered Therapy. The Post Institute works with adults, children and families struggling with early life trauma and the impact on the development of the mind/body system. A renowned clinician, lecturer, and author, Bryan specializes in a holistic family-based treatment approach that addresses the underlying interactive dynamics of the entire family. Bryan has developed a new paradigm of parenting which he calls The Stress Model in direct opposition to traditional parenting and societal behavior modification programming Bryan himself grew up in foster care before he was adopted.



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2021 Workshop Speakers



Laura Anderson has been a licensed clinical psychologist working with children, adolescents and families for more than 20 years. She has provided support to foster youth, foster parents, and foster care agencies. Dr. Anderson has worked with adopted youth and their families in various settings; she has spent countless hours in classrooms helping children learn. Dr. Anderson is also an adoptive parent. She is currently based in Hawaii, and she provides national and international training on a variety of child psychology topics.



Heather Bollier Yetter, M Ed brings extensive experience with foster/adoptive families and is currently Supervisor at Stanford Sierra Youth and Families. She has supervised multiple Children's Mental Health programs including Wraparound, Destination Family Youth Permanency Team, Capitol Kids are Waiting, Wendy's Wonderful Kids and Youth Speak Out.



Lisa Clark is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the Executive Director of Adopt International, a domestic and international adoption agency. She has worked in the field of adoption for over 20 years, primarily working with expectant parents assisting them in making decisions that are based in empowerment and choice. Lisa loves working with families years after placement providing support to normalize the unique experiences that adoptive and birth families face. Lisa grew up in an adoptive family and is also an adoptive parent.



Jemma Elliot, MA, LMFT, LPCC, is Department Co-Chair and Core Faculty for Pacifica Graduate Institute's Counseling Psychology Department. She supports administrative, curricular, and developmental aspects of the department, as well as teaches both research and clinical courses in the MA Counseling Psychology program. Jemma has a clinical focus on adoption and separation trauma, and has provided trainings and spoken on panels to advance the understanding of the needs of children and families on the adoption spectrum throughout Los Angeles County. She also has a special interest in working with PTSD from a depth psychological perspective, and in witnessing and hosting the extrasensory gifts and energetic awakenings that often arise in clients after traumatic experience. She has a great love for the arts, and is a long-time advocate for farmed animal and greyhound rescue and rehabilitation.



Leslie Foge, MA, MFT, a psychotherapist in the Bay Area, working in the adoption field for over 30 years. Her clients include adoptive parents, families and adopted persons. She also works regularly with first/birth parents. Leslie is an associate professor at St. Mary's College of California in their Graduate Counseling Program where she supervises and trains clinicians in psychotherapy, especially in the area of adoption.



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Angela Gee is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist practicing in Los Angeles. An adoptee and adoptive parent, Angela also facilitates adult and youth adoption groups in Pasadena and identity development workshops that focus on the unique experiences that adoptees and their families may encounter.



Beth Hall, Executive Director of Pact, an Adoption Alliance, is the white adoptive mother of a Latina daughter and an African American son (both now adults), and grew up with an adopted sister. She co-founded Pact 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* (Jessica Kingsley Press), as well as numerous articles on adoption and race. She is a nationally known advocate for adopted children of color who regularly lectures and leads workshops on ethical, non-racist adoption practices.



Sydney Jacobs Allen was born and raised in East Oakland and is a very proud Bay Area native. Sydney graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology and Africana Studies, and a minor in Non-Profit Organizations. She is an interracial adult adoptee; growing up in a multi-racial, queer lead, single parent family. Sydney is committed to social justice, advocating on behalf of interracial adoptees, queer people, and other marginalized populations. Sydney currently works as a Visitation Counselor, working with families first entering the foster care system.



Jill Jacobs brings over 35 years of experience in multi-cultural community based health and social services organizations. She has a Master's degree in Health Services Administration, and has been the Executive Director of Family Builders since 1996. She has developed a program model that is responsive to the needs of children and youth needing permanent families. Jill is a national leader and advocate on issues affecting adoptive families. Jill has created innovative programs to meet the needs of underserved and disenfranchised children and youth; including services for older youth, believing no child should leave the foster care system without a permanent family. Jill is the mother of two children, via adoption.



Rena Konomis (she/her) is Amara's Post Adoption Program manager and a Washington state court appointed Confidential Intermediary providing services to those within the adoption triad. As an adoptive parent, she believes that it is a treasure for her son to know his birth family narrative. Rena's hope is to influence change for adoptees and their families who aspire to find their truth.



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Susan Dusza Guerra Leksander, LMFT, is a first mother, Latina transracial adoptee, a licensed psychotherapist and the Agency and Clinical Director at Pact, an Adoption Alliance. Also First/Birth Family Specialist, Susan focuses on the needs of expectant parents considering adoption, and first/birth families of who have placed children of color for adoption. She is in the ongoing complex journey of reunion with her first families and the daughter she placed for adoption. Susan envisions a world where all expectant parents and first/birth parents are fully empowered, accurately informed, and emotionally supported, in order to make the best decisions for their children and themselves.



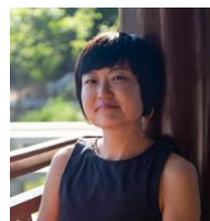
Rachel Michaelsen, LCSW, is a social worker in private practice in Oakland, California where she works with individuals and parents to address a wide variety of issues using both talk therapy, energy psychology interventions and sound healing. She has provided supervision for mental health professionals working with youth and families who receive services in the public behavioral health system during the last 20 years and for over 15 years she has been providing training on various mental health topics to individuals who work with system involved youth including children in foster and adoptive families. Ms. Michaelsen in the Chair of the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology's Humanitarian Committee.



Rick Oculito collaborates with educators and school administrators to create safe and LGBTQ-inclusive schools as the Education Manager at Our Family Coalition. OFC fosters community-building and resilience among LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers and provides education about family diversity and anti-bias work to educators and child-serving professionals.



Pauly Pagenhart is the Communications Director at Our Family Coalition. Pauly's work focuses on strengthening understanding across seeming barriers of difference, using authentic connection and communication as critical paths toward social justice. OFC fosters community-building and resilience among LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers and provides education about family diversity and anti-bias work to educators and child-serving professionals.



Robyn Park is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who dedicates her practice to serving children, adolescents, and families, particularly those touched by foster care and/or adoption. She provides community trainings, workshops, and presentations both locally and internationally. Robyn's personal experience as a transracial adoptee has informed her clinical training in agency and school-based settings, and has deeply influenced her professional perspectives.



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Malaika Parker, Pact's Adoptive Parents of Color Collaborative Director, 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.



Sandy Sertyn, LMFT, has twelve years of experience with Wendy's Wonderful Kids through Stanford Sierra Youth and Families, finding adoptive families for foster youth with one or more barriers to adoption. Her focus includes adoption preparation, recruitment, placement and pre- and post-adoption support. She has finalized over 100 adoptions and guardianships to date.



Angela Tucker is a black woman and was raised by white parents. She is an internationally-recognized thought leader on transracial adoption and is an advocate for adoptee rights. She is the subject of the documentary, CLOSURE, the creator of The Adopted Life web-series, host of the podcast The Adoptee Next Door, a sensitivity consultant to renowned fictional work, including Broadway's Jagged Little Pill and NBC's hit show, This Is Us. Her debut book will be published in Spring 2023 (Beacon Press). Her mission is to amplify and center adoptee voices.



Katie Wynen, (she.her), MSW, is a transracial, international Colombian adoptee, with a Masters in Social Work. Katie has worked with members of the adoption triad since 2006. She studied under Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao in Boston before moving to California and joining the Pact staff where she works in adoption placement, leads the adoptees of color support group, and provides adoption education nationwide. Katie is an Angels in Adoption 2019 Recipient from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.



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Delrisha White holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism & Media Studies with a minor in Global Studies from Bennett College in Greensboro, NC. In 2019 she earned her master's in Education Policy & Management at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and was awarded the Intellectual Contribution award. Del is a journalist, educator and social impact leader who confronts educational inequity and racial and socioeconomic injustice through education and storytelling. Her life's work is a culmination of her experience growing up in a family impacted by poverty, as well as the criminal justice and child welfare systems. Delrisha is a member of Pact's Board of Directors.



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