



#KAAN2017 Conference

Together We Rise: Negotiating Difficult Conversations in Adoption

JUNE 23-25, 2017

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh – Greentree
500 Mansfield Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15205

Details for #KAAN2018 will be available here in mid-January 2018. The information below from our last conference is provided to give you a sense of our conference and organization.

JUNE ♦ 23

fri 1:00-4:45pm

Registration & Exhibit Hall

Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, MSW,
Ellen Heitzig, Susanne Switzer, MS,
Brenda Burlbaugh

Sign in, pick up conference materials, and browse our store and exhibit/vendor tables. Presenter books may still be arriving during this time but will be available all weekend.

fri 1:30-2:30pm

Newcomer Orientation

*** ADOPTees ONLY ***

Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW
KAAN is often described as a family reunion. And, like in most families, you can expect to experience a full spectrum of emotions, epiphanies, and energy throughout the weekend. This orientation session provides a space to meet other people who are new to the conference as well as hear advice on how to make the most of your time here.

Newcomer Orientation

Stephen David Johnson, (정응기)
BSW, MA

Similar to the concurrent adoptee-only newcomer orientation, this

session is open to all participants who wish to connect with others to prepare for the conference. We highly recommend that first-time attendees take part in one of these sessions.

Youth Activities

Connect-a-Kid

Stop by to meet other conference youth in a series of drop-in activities organized by Connect-a-Kid.

Childcare Block #1 (ends 3:45pm)

Connect-a-Kid

Parents who enroll their child/ren in this program may drop them off for play and activity during all four time blocks but are required to volunteer during one of the slots. Adoptees who wish to volunteer are encouraged to complete the Adoptee Mentor Application Form on our website.

fri 2:45-3:45pm

The Global Diaspora

Grace Newton, Shaaren Pine,
Mariette Williams, MS, fac. by Rosita González, MS

How do race, birthplace, and policies affect adoptees throughout their lives? What key factors drive adoptions in different sending countries? In this session,

four transnational adoptees from four different countries discuss the common threads that connect adoptees as well as the nuances of specific sending countries and individual experiences that complicate and differentiate their narratives. The audience for this panel includes adoptees seeking solidarity across cultural ties and partners/parents of adult adoptees who wish to better understand these transnational perspectives.

Korean Language Class

Grace Euna Ko

Have you considered learning Korean? Join this informal session to discuss your personal goals and concerns with a Korean language professional. Korean has the most logical and scientific alphabet system in the world and getting started might be easier than you think. The session leader will guide participants with multiple ways to get started and make progress quickly.

Beyond Partisan Politics: Tackling Life as a POC Post Election

*** ADOPTees ONLY ***

Kimberly McKee PhD

The wake of the 2016 election continues to ripple through the

electorate and broader American society. Calls for a Muslim registry immediately following the election conjured up images of Japanese internment. There has been a spike of anti-South Asian violence alongside anti-Muslim violence similar to rates in violence following the September 11th attacks. For many transracial adoptees of color, this election and its outcome meant grappling with the explicit and implicit racism of family members, friends, and colleagues. Prioritizing self-care and self-preservation in a time where misogyny, transphobia, and racism (among other prejudices) find themselves embraced remains challenging. Yet the fight continues. We will discuss how we navigate this particular moment and the resources we find most helpful.

Youth Activities

Connect-a-Kid

Meet other conference youth in a series of activities organized by Connect-a-Kid.

Childcare Block #1 (con'd)

Connect-a-Kid

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fri 4:00-4:30pm

Conference Kickoff

Meet KAAAN's leadership and get the scoop on conference details.

fri @ 5:00pm

Adult Adoptee Dinner

(optional; add. \$\$, open to all registered adult adoptees)

Aeriel A. Ashlee, M.Ed; Ellen Heitzig

Register online for this delicious Korean buffet dinner at Korea Garden, 414 Semple St, Pittsburgh. Meat and vegetarian options will be offered. Cost is \$25 (gratuity included; cash bar additional). Coordinator Aeriel Ashlee (aerielashlee@gmail.com) will reach out to all registrants in June to coordinate transportation for those who need it (volunteer drivers welcome). Group departs promptly at 5:00PM for the restaurant and will return in time for evening activities.

Community Dinner Meetup *(optional; add. \$\$, open to all)*

We will reserve a section of the hotel restaurant for conference participants to gather for dinner. This is a casual affair; come as you are able and order/pay right off of the menu. Indicate your interest when you register for the conference so that we can reserve the appropriate amount of seating.

fri 7:00-8:00pm

Registration

Sign in; pick up conference materials.

fri 8:00-9:30pm

ADOPTEE SHOWCASE: Screening of *AKA SEOUL* followed by Q&A w/ Filmmaker

Dan Matthews

AKA SEOUL is a follow up to the documentary series AKA DAN, which chronicled the 2013 journey of alternative rapper and Korean adoptee Dan Matthews as he reconnected with his biological family, including a twin brother he never knew about. Three years later, audiences will follow Matthews and four other Korean adoptees from diverse backgrounds as they visit Korea during the summer of 2016 and

shed light on other aspects of the adoptee journey. Film subjects include:

- Dan, an alternative rapper from Los Angeles, California. Three years after first meeting his biological family, he returns to Korea to introduce his adoptive and biological mothers for the first time.
- Siri, a Swedish adoptee experiences Korean culture for the very first time.
- Peter, an artist and professor from Boston seeks to discover his artistic muse.
- Chelsea, a woman from Minnesota who was rejected by her adoptive parents because of her sexuality, reclaims her identity in Korea.
- Min, a transgender man from the San Francisco Bay Area, experiences Korea for the first time as a man.

Post screening, Dan Matthews will share additional insights and answer audience questions.

This event is open to adults and teens at their parents' discretion.

INTERGENERATIONAL FILM: Screening of *Kubo and the Two Strings*

Hosted by Connect-a-Kid

This animated, Asian-inspired action-adventure film has won awards and includes healthy adoption themes. Sara Campbell, MSW, will be available to discuss any questions after the film.

JUNE ♦ 24
sat @ 6:15am

Recreational Jog

Stephen David Johnson, (정응기)
BSW, MA

Meet in the lobby.

sat 7:00-8:30am**Continental Breakfast**

Continental breakfast; please wear conference name tag.

sat @ 7:30am**Breakfast Meetup for First-time Participants**

Katie Jae Naftzer, LICSW *Stephen David Johnson, (정응기) BSW, MA*
Grab some breakfast and join us at a specially marked table.

Youth Breakfast Meetup & Field Trip

Connect-a-Kid

Eat with other conference youth at a special table in the ballroom prior to heading out for the day's activities. **Parents must stop by table to sign in their youth.** Group will travel with adoptee mentors to fun area sites, including the Pittsburgh Zoo.

Registration & Exhibit Hall

Sign in, pick up conference materials, and browse our store and exhibit/vendor tables.

sat @ 8:00am**OPENING KEYNOTE
PANEL: The Complexity of Asian American Masculinities**

Benjamin Kim Oser, MA, Noah Sinangil, Alex Myung Wager
Historically, Asian American men have been relegated to racially subordinated masculinity. They were not the kind of men who were sexual, threatening, or powerful. And even when they had power or were perceived to be powerful, Orientalism positioned them as an amusing foe or as a foible on the verge of demise. More recently, we have seen greater multi-dimensional depictions of Asian American masculinity in twenty-first century

television and film. The use of YouTube by Asian Americans also contributed to these dynamic representations. This panel will discuss why representation matters in a nuanced conversation concerning the multiplicity of Asian American manhood.

sat 8:45-10:00am**The Complexity of Asian American Masculinities Part #2 (Post-Keynote Roundtable)**

Benjamin Kim Oser, MA, Noah Sinangil, Alex Myung Wager
A continuation of our breakfast keynote, with time for roundtable discussion with the panel.

Connecting to Self Through Mindfulness

*** ADOPTEEES ONLY ***

Nicole K. Sheppard, MA
Adoptees will participate in a group mindfulness activity, and together they will share and process their unique experiences. Through this exploration, the concept of mindfulness will be introduced and information will be provided explaining how developing a mindfulness practice can be a useful tool for adoptees in connecting more deeply to their own personal experience, as well as strengthening their connections to others.

Parenting as an Adoptee

*** ADOPTEEES ONLY ***

JaeRan Kim PhD, LICSW, Heewon Lee, BA
Becoming a parent is often a profound experience for adoptees. In this session, the presenters (both Korean adoptee parents) will facilitate a discussion around the findings of a national research study of Korean adoptee parents. The discussion will center on two questions: What are the unique experiences of being a Korean adoptee parent? And, how has

being a parent influenced your thoughts and understanding about adoption? This session offers insights into the relationships adoptees have with extended family including adoptive and birth parents, partners and spouses, and biological and adopted children.

Motherhood 2.0: Adoptees as Mothers

Shaaren Pine, Mariette Williams, MS, Rosita González, MS

From pregnancy to the teen years, adoptee mothers from India, Haiti and South Korea discuss the fears, foibles and triumphs of motherhood. One thing adoptee mothers continue to learn: that our challenges as adoptees are replicated in our children. Join us for a robust, diverse, and powerful discussion on motherhood as adoptees.

DadSpace

David Amarel, PhD, Matthew Schroeder

Join us for a discussion of adoption-related issues from the unique perspective of the father. In this session, we explore and discuss the roles that both birth and adoptive fathers play in the lives of our children. The presenters will share personal experiences and insights, and facilitate a conversation that will help us be the best fathers we can be.

Childcare Block #2 (ends 11:45am)

Connect-a-Kid

sat 10:15-11:45am**Well-being in Reunion**

Lee Fritz, Whitney Fritz, MBA

This session will discuss the oft-overlooked difficulties in birth family reunion and the importance of self-care and mental-health maintenance. The group will look

at what that means for adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth families. Personal lessons from the presenters' own birth family reunion will be shared and discussed. This session is open to all members of the adoptee community.

Growing Up Together: Me & Mom

Aeriel A. Ashlee, M.Ed, Leanne G. Lemire

In this session, a transracial, Asian-American adoptee and her white adoptive mother will share how they have journeyed together and grown in their relationship over the past 30 years. They will share lessons learned along the way related to adoption trauma, birth family search, and unpacking racism and privilege. The presenters will discuss their evolving relationship from daughter/mother to co-adulting and most recently person of color/white ally. This session is intended for adult adoptees and adoptive parents who want to think more about what it means to cultivate relationships with one another into adulthood.

Race Basics: Conversations on Race Part #1

Erica Gehringer, Susan Harris O'Connor MSW, JaeRan Kim PhD, MSW, LISW, Ellen Heitzig

This is part one to a two-part session. Talking about race is crucial for transracially adoptive families, especially when speaking with people of color and their white parents. However, the thought of initiating these conversations is often a daunting and difficult task. Intended for beginner audiences, this panel aims to introduce some race-related terms, topics, and scenarios that participants will encounter at (and outside of) the conference.

Dealing with the Loss of Parent/s

*** ADOPTEEES ONLY ***

Kerry Bondy, MS, PA-C, Mark Hagland, MS, Bevin Hale, M.Ed, Alyson Yost BSN, RN-BC, CHPN

Join this panel to hear how several adult adoptees have dealt with the event of a terminal diagnosis or loss of their adoptive parent(s). How is this loss different for adult adoptees who have already experienced the loss of birth parents? Hear each personal story and how each adoptee has coped with the grieving process. Discussion and questions encouraged.

Childcare Block #2 (con'd)

Connect-a-Kid

sat @ 12:00pm

LUNCHEON & MIDDAY KEYNOTE: "Real Family," Adoptee Birth Search, and Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing

Kim Park Nelson, PhD

Kim Park Nelson will discuss birth search as a core part of collective adoptee cultures and focus on the recent phenomenon of birth search through commercial DNA testing companies such as 23andMe. She will explore issues and problems around using direct-to-consumer genetic testing as a birth search methodology, as well as the significance of test results for adoptees.

Post-Keynote Book Signing:

Conference authors will be available in the ballroom after the keynote. Bring your copies of their work to be autographed.

sat 2:00-3:15pm

I Don't Talk to My APs

*** ADOPTEEES ONLY ***

Bethany L. Kenstowicz, MPA, JD
Most adoptees have heard it at some point in their lives. You should be thankful. Appreciative. Grateful. But what happens when you and your adoptive parents don't get along, or even choose to part ways? Come listen to one adoptee's story about why she no longer contacts her adoptive parents, how she handles the stigma, and what the decision has meant for her life.

Patterns in Adoptee Parenting: A Case Study

Heewon Lee, BA, JaeRan Kim PhD, MSW, LISW Xiang Zhou, MA

Recognizing that adoption affects adopted individuals throughout the lifespan, a study of Korean adoptees who are parents was conducted. Several important themes emerged from the participants centered around reflections of their ethnic, racial, and adoption identities and how being a Korean adoptee affects their approach to parenting. This session also offers insights into the relationships adoptees have with extended family including adoptive and birth parents, partners and spouses, and biological and adopted children.

Reframing & Retraining: Conversations on Race Part #2

Erica Gehringer, Kimberly McKee PhD, Susan Harris O'Connor MSW, Benjamin Kim Oser, MA

This is part two of a two-part session. Many mainstream conceptions and narratives of race focus on white people's feelings and experiences. Intended for intermediate and advanced audiences, this session aims to challenge these narratives by recentering our conversations around people of color, the people most negatively and directly affected by race-relations in the United States. Comprised of

***Subject to change without notice. Final details will be distributed onsite at the conference.

adoptees from different professional angles, we will discuss behavioral, educational, and media techniques that can be used to “flip the script” and “retrain” ourselves to not allow the conversation to derail back to a white audience.

LGBTQ Adoptees & Allies

Nicki Koniak, Tynishia Walker, LLMSW, Kate Zielaskowski, MS

This panel of self-identified LGBTQ adoptees will share their unique experiences and create a safe space to facilitate discussion. Join us as we investigate what it means to have intersecting identities and/or support others as allies. **Co-sponsored by the Ellie Conant Memorial Fund.**

Childcare Block #3 (ends 4:45pm)
Connect-a-Kid

sat 3:30-4:45pm

Adoptee Spouse Toolkit: Relationship Building Strategies

Andre S. Kenstowicz, MA

This session addresses some of the most frequent conflict escalators in adoptee romantic relationships: Abandonment, Identity, and Change. Attendees will gain practical strategies to recognize, normalize and adapt adoptee and partner behaviors for stronger relationships. The session begins with a lecture-style overview and concludes with a hands-on activity where small groups address a given relationship conflict through implementing the toolkit.

Transracial Adoptees & Racial Justice: Where Do We Fit In?

*** ADOPTEEES ONLY ***

Aeriel A. Ashlee, M.Ed, Amanda Assalone, PhD, Sarah Gallenberg Maloney, MA

Racism exists at the foundation of our nation, but what does this mean for transracial adoptees? How do

we contribute to racial justice movements like #BlackLivesMatter? How do we make sense of our positionality as people of color raised in and by white families? As adoptees, do we benefit from white privilege? How do we navigate imposter feelings when we are among communities of color? This session will provide a space for transracial adoptees who are interested in anti-racism to unpack some of the complexities of our identities and talk about how we can approach racial justice together.

Mental Health & Survival

ADOPTEE DISCUSSION (Non-Adoptees invited to observe this session)

Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW

Adopted teens are four times more likely to attempt suicide. This is a difficult topic to discuss, but it's an important issue in our community. The presenter will highlight some important statistics, discuss adoption themes that have surfaced in her work, and suggest how adoptive parents can begin conversations about these issues. Additionally, we will discuss proactive ways to intervene, what to look for and how to respond. There will also be time for sensitive, thoughtful discussion. Adoptees may share if comfortable. Others are invited to observe and ask questions at the end.

The Social Complexities of Being an Adoptee

Becca Zielaskowski, BBA, Kate Zielaskowski, MS

Being an adoptee involves navigating a variety of different social groups. Many transracial adoptees start this life-long process in their white adoptive families and continue throughout their lives with their peers, colleagues, and partners. We will discuss how transracial adoptees explore and enter social groups outside of their own, both

individually and with their partners. The discussion will focus on how navigating these groups impact both the adoptee and their partners.

Childcare Block #3 (con'd)

Connect-a-Kid

sat 4:45-5:15pm

Affinity/Support Group Meetups

A quiet place to decompress and process feelings from the day. No formal session ... just a safe place to talk. Separate spaces for first parents, adult adoptees, parents of adoptees, and partners and siblings of adoptees.

sat @ 5:30pm

Pre-Dinner Social & Raffle

Mingle and get good seats for the night's festivities. Cash bar available as well as light appetizers. Purchase your raffle tickets during this time as well.

sat 6:00-9:30pm

Saturday Gala

Stacy Schroeder, Kim McKee, Michael Stanley, Chasing Lovely, DANakaDAN

Enjoy dinner, cash bar, and conversation with your tablemates before we begin our evening program and festivities. Program will include recognition ceremony, adoptee group picture, raffle drawing, a concert by Chasing lovely and after-party with alternative hip hop artist DANakaDAN.

Youth Pool Party

Youth will be dismissed for a chaperoned pool party at approximately 7:45PM. All non-swimmers and children under seven must be accompanied by a parent. Pool party ends at 9:30PM.

JUNE ♦ 25**sun 7:00-8:30am****Breakfast**

Continental Breakfast ... please wear your name tag.

sun 8:30-9:30am

Exhibit Hall

Challenging Racism: What Can Transracial Adoptees Do?*Susan Harris O'Connor, MSW, Mark Hagland, MS*

Transracial adoptees are not always provided with the tools or models to confront racism throughout their lives. We often encounter racist statements and racial aggressions in various forms and spaces. Do you struggle with asserting yourself to outsiders, friends, and family members when they voice a derogatory statement? Come join this session for dialogue and practical strategies to help adult transracial adoptees and other people of color learn how to address and manage experiences with prejudice and racism.

Adoptee Truths*** ADOPTEES ONLY ***

Bethany L. Kenstowicz, MPA, JD
Have you ever tried the food of your people and pretended to like it? Squished your eyes together to make them look rounder? Has anyone ever asked you something about your adoption that made you cringe? Presented in the form of short confessions, embarrassing moments, and burning questions, this session invites adoptees to listen and share their unspoken truths in an understanding and nonjudgmental setting.

Genuine Allyship*Jen Hilzinger, Joy Lieberthal Rho, LCSW*

The current climate of our nation has left many wondering what to do ... wanting to act but uncertain what is appropriate, overwhelmed by varying opinions and afraid of a misstep. Learn some of the basics of being a good ally and how to keep growing in your understanding. Time will be given for discussion.

Equipping Adoptees for the Real World*Amy Partain, Nicole K. Sheppard, MA, Carolyn Hathaway*

What are some of the most important tools adoptive parents can give their adoptee children? How can we prepare our children to face some of the most common struggles faced by transracial adoptees? Our three panelists will share their personal journeys and facilitate a discussion on how to best equip transracial adoptees for the real world.

Exploring My Identity*** ADOPTEES AGES 16-20 ONLY ****Benjamin Kim Oser, MA, Kate Firestone*

Maybe you know what you want to do with your life. Maybe you are just starting to figure it out. Either way, you are beginning to spend more and more of your academic, work, and social time separately from your parents. This leads to questions. Who are you, really? Who do you want to be? Are there labels you would like to shed, new identities you would like to explore? How does the world see you and is it different from how you would like to be seen? Join your peers and older adoptees to talk about how to find and define yourself at this time in your life.

Youth & Childcare Program Medley (Childcare Block #4)*Connect-a--Kid*

Youth can choose from a variety of options, including small group discussions, games, and other activities.

My Brother/Sister Is An Adoptee*** NON-ADOPTED SIBLINGS OF ADOPTEES AGES 7-17 ONLY ****Martha Crawford*

Your parents brought you to this conference to learn more about your brother or sister, who is adopted. Whether or not you like it, this is a good thing. You will find people sometimes ask rude questions or make jokes about adoption and will want to do something about it. Still, it would be nice if something at this conference was about YOU. Well, guess what? This session is. Join with other non-adopted siblings of adoptees, including a few who are already grown up, to talk about what it is like to be the sibling of an adoptee.

sun 9:45-10:45am**The Gaze and Its Privilege***Martha Crawford, LCSW, Joy Lieberthal Rho, LCSW*

The gaze originates from the idea that a viewer with a privileged stance objectifies those without the status of privilege to return the gaze. When the privileged viewer recognizes the power differential, it can disturb and create feelings of shame. To date, the language of adoption, race and identity can reflect a burden for the privileged to challenge their gaze as well as the burden of the gazed to create a sense of self within such limiting vernacular. What happens when adoptive parents are faced with the dilemma of owning their privileged stance in the transcultural/transracial adoption community, and how does the adopted person negotiate this cultural power differential?

Navigating Birth Family Search & Reunion

*** ADOPTees ONLY ***

Bevin Hale, M.Ed, Stephen David Johnson, BSW, MA, Sara Smith, CCH, Alyson Yost BSN, RN-BC, CHPN

The decision to begin a search for birth family information can be difficult and filled with emotion. Join us to hear a panel of adult adoptees who have been involved in searching for their birth family. Each story is very unique. Some have reunited, some continue to search, and another is considering starting the search for the first time. DNA testing will also be discussed. There will be time for a question and answer session at the end.

Taking Hold of the Teen Years

Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW

When the teen years arrive, many adoptive parents feel like they're starting from scratch. When children become teenagers, their needs change. The ways that adoptive parents used to parent may no longer be as effective. The presenter will outline four tasks for adoptive parents striving to successfully transition their teens into adulthood. These tasks include the process of unrescuing, setting adoption-sensitive limits, having empathic conversations and envisioning the future. In this workshop, we will explore what needs to change from childhood to teenhood and the ways that adoption overlaps in the process.

Being Difficult

David Amarel, PhD, Kimberly McKee, PhD, Susan Harris O'Connor, MSW

Discourse about adoption is difficult. At least, it should be. Confronting challenging, non-binary issues around adoption, and transracial adoption in particular, is critical for growth: in systems and policy, in education, interpersonally, and psychologically. In this panel, we will discuss the process and impact of difficult conversations about race, identity, and adoption from four different perspectives: systemic, academic, psychotherapeutic, and personal identity development. Our panelists, adoptees and an adoptive parent, are experts in these areas. Presentation and discussion will interweave examples and best practices from these four approaches.

Microaggressions in High School and College

*** ADOPTees AGES 16-20 ONLY ***

Michael Burdan, Mark Hagland
Racial jokes on social media. Comments around the holiday dinner table. Classmates repeating a snide political jab at someone of color. We've all been there. How do you respond? Connect with your peers and other adoptees to learn some tips and tools for handling these challenging moments.

Youth & Childcare Program Medley (Childcare Block #4)

Connect-a-Kid

Youth can choose from a variety of options, including small group

discussions, games, and other activities.

My Parent Is An Adoptee

*** CHILDREN OF ADOPTees AGES 7-17 ONLY ***

Taylor and Chloe Turner with Kat Turner

Your mom or dad is an adoptee. Just like them, you have questions about birth family you may never have met. You are not always sure when it is OK to ask, though. Maybe your parents are different races too, and you get questions at school about that. Here's a chance for you to ask your questions and talk with others who share the same experiences as you.

sun 11:00am-12:15pm

CLOSING COFFEEHOUSE:

Where Do We Go From Here? Takeaways & Tasks from #KAAN2017

Aeriel A. Ashlee, M.Ed, Kyle C, Ashlee

Join "The Social Justice Couple" as they lead a review of key insights from the conference and explore how new knowledge and tools might translate into action and support in our daily lives, helping us to negotiate difficult conversations and situations.

Youth & Childcare Block #4 Closing Party

Connect-a-Kid

Gather with friends and mentors for games and yummy treats.
