

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS TO EXAMINE RACE IN FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hear expert testimony on transracial foster parenting and adoption. The Commission will examine whether transracial foster care and adoption serve the best interest of children, whether MEPA has been successful, and how well the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is enforcing the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA). Congress enacted MEPA because of concerns that many children languished in foster care as prospective parents of a different racial group were not provided the opportunity to adopt them. MEPA's broad goal is to abolish racial discrimination for both children and prospective parents in child welfare. MEPA, as amended, prohibits states and other entities involved in foster care or adoption placements that receive federal financial assistance from delaying or denying a child's foster care or adoptive placement on the basis of the child's or the prospective parent's race, color, or national origin and requires states to diligently recruit foster and adoptive parents who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in the state needing foster and adoptive homes in order for the state's child welfare programs to remain eligible for federal assistance. Critics of MEPA argue that children are better able to combat discrimination and develop role models to confront negative stereotypes when they are of the same race as their parents. Supporters argue that transracial adoption serves the children's best interests. They also argue that children in transracial adoption do as well as other children on standard measures of self-esteem, cognitive development and educational achievement, among other areas.

The speakers will include Thomas Atwood, president and CEO, National Council for Adoption; Elizabeth Bartholet, Morris Wasserstein Public Interest Professor of Law, Harvard School of Law; Kay Brown, acting director, Education, Workforce and Income Security, U.S. Government Accountability Office; Joseph Kroll, executive director, North American Council on Adoptable Children; Ruth McRoy, senior research fellow, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute; Joan Ohl, Commissioner, Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Professor Rita Simon, Washington College of Law, American University; and Linda Spears, acting senior vice president, Child Welfare League of America.

When: Friday, September 21, 2007, 9:30 a.m.

Where: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 624 Ninth Street NW, Room 540 Washington, D.C.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chairman Abigail Thernstrom, and Commissioners Jennifer C. Braceras, Gail Heriot, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan D. Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, Jr., and Michael Yaki. Kenneth L. Marcus is Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the media and general public.

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