

Delve Deeper into *OFF AND RUNNING*

A film by Nicole Opper

This multimedia resource list, compiled by Susan Conlon and Martha Perry of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming POV documentary *Off and Running*.

Off and Running tells the story of Brooklyn teenager Avery, a track star with a bright future. She is the adopted African-American child of white Jewish lesbians. Her older brother is black and Puerto Rican and her younger brother is Korean. Though it may not look typical, Avery's household is like most American homes — until Avery writes to her birth mother. Her mother's response sends Avery plunging into crisis and causes her to struggle over her "true" identity, the circumstances of her adoption and her estrangement from black culture. Just when it seems as if her life is unraveling, Avery decides to pick up the pieces.

ADULT NONFICTION

Adoption

Biscontini, Tracey Vasil. *Adoption.* Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2009. "Issues on Trial" series. This book is a compilation of opposing viewpoints on many topics surrounding adoption, including adoption rights of same-sex couples.

Eldridge, Sherrie. *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew.* New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 1999. Written by a woman who was adopted herself, this book gives voice to adopted children's unspoken concerns, and shows adoptive parents how to free their kids from feelings of fear, abandonment, and shame.

LGBT Adoption

Burns, Kate. *Gay and Lesbian Families.* Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005. "At Issue" series. This book investigates key issues related to gay and lesbian families, including gay parenting, marriage laws, gay children and teens, adoption policies, and religious viewpoints in the U.S. and Canada.

Drucker, Jane. *Lesbian And Gay Families Speak Out Understanding The Joys And Challenges Of Diverse Family Life.* New York: Da Capo Press, 2001. This book documents the stories of over two dozen families in which gay fathers and lesbian mothers are raising children in a wide variety of settings and styles.

Garner, Abigail. *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is.* New York: HarperCollins, 2004. A straight woman with gay parents chronicles the experiences of other adult children like herself, whom she has come to know during her eight years of community organizing and activism.

Racism

Rothman, Barbara Katz. *Weaving a Family: Untangling Race and Adoption.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2005. Barbara Katz Rothman, a noted sociologist who has previously written on motherhood and the social implications of the human genome project, now turns her eye toward race and family. Weaving together the sociological, the historical, and the personal, Barbara Katz Rothman looks at the contemporary American family through the lens of race, family, and adoption, within the context of the changing meaning of motherhood. Drawing on her own experience as the white mother of a black child, she offers new insights for understanding the way race and family are shaped in America today.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *"Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity.* New York: Basic Books, 2003. Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, asserts that we do not know how to talk about our racial differences: Whites are afraid of using the wrong words and being perceived as "racist", while parents of color are afraid of exposing their children to painful racial realities.

Transracial Adoption

Simon, Rita J. and Rhonda M Roorda. *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. See also, *In Their Parents' Voices: Reflections on Raising Transracial Adoptees*, also by Simon and Roorda.

Simon, Rita J. and Rhonda M. Roorda. *In Their Parents' Voices: Reflections on Raising Transracial Adoptees.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. A collection of experiences from parents who have adopted across racial lines, this book is the sequel to *In Their Own Voices*, which documents the same stories from the children's perspectives.

Simon, Rita J. and Rhonda M Roorda. *In Their Siblings' Voices: White Non-Adopted Siblings Talk About Their Experiences Being Raised with Black and Biracial Brothers and Sisters.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. This book shares the stories of 20 white, non-adopted siblings who grew up with black or biracial brothers and sisters in the late 1960s and 1970s. Belonging to the same families profiled in *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories* and *In Their Parents' Voices: Reflections on Raising Transracial Adoptees*, these siblings offer their perspectives on the multiracial adoption experience, which, for them, played out against the backdrop of two tumultuous, politically charged decades.

Steinberg, Gail and Hall, Beth. *Inside Transracial Adoption.* Indianapolis: Perspectives Press, 2000. *Inside Transracial Adoption* moves beyond the debate to offer real solutions to real challenges. Steinberg & Hall's moving personal stories are encouraging and supportive and reinforce the message that race matters, racism is alive, and transracially-built families can develop strong and binding ties.

Biological Parents

Homes A.M. *The Mistress's Daughter.* New York: Penguin, 2008. This memoir tells the story of A.M. Homes meeting her biological parents when she was in



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her early 30s. It is a deeply personal story about the author's adoption and both her adoptive and biological families.

Strauss, Jean. *Birtright*. New York: Penguin, 1994.

Written by an adoptee, this is an important reference that is valuable to anyone affected by adoption. The book includes guidance on making the decision to "search," negotiating legalities, surviving the emotional turbulence of a reunion, and dealing with the impact a reunion has on adoptive parents.

NONFICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Racial Identity

Gaskins, Pearl Fuyo, editor. *What Are You?: Voices of Mixed-Race Young People*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999. (Grade 8 & Up).

In this sensitive, thoughtful collection of interviews, essays, and poetry, over 40 young adults, ranging in age from 14 to 26, relate their experiences growing up in the United States. Their racial identities represent a wide blend of cultures: European, African, Asian, Native American, Jewish, Arabic, Caribbean, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander.

Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to Be Different*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2001. (Pre-K-Grade 3). Illustrations and brief text describe all kinds of differences that are "okay," such as, "It's Okay to be a different color," "It's Okay to need some help," "It's Okay to be adopted," and "It's Okay to have a different nose."

Wright, Bill. *When the Black Girl Sings*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers 2008. (Grade 6-9). Adopted by white parents and sent to an exclusive Connecticut girls' school where she is the only black student, 14-year-old Lahni Schuler feels like an outcast, especially when her parents separate. However, after attending a local church where she hears gospel music for the first time, she finds her voice.

Adoption

Lancon, Ann. *Adoption: How to Deal with the Questions of*

***Your Past*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2006.** (Grade 6-9). The goal of the book is to help young people understand the questions and concerns they might have about their birth history. Also discussed are issues that may arise when an adopted child wants to learn more about, or unite with, their birth family.

FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Adoption

Alvarez, Julia. *Find Miracles*. New York: Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2004. (Grade 6-9).

When new student Pablo arrives in the U.S. from 16-year-old Milly's native land, Milly tries to ignore him. However, with the desire to come to terms with her adoption as a child, she returns for a visit with Pablo and his family.

Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Mineola, NY: Dover

Publications, 2002. (Pre-K-Grade 3). This is the story of an orphan boy who escapes from a workhouse and travels to London where he meets the Artful Dodger, leader of a gang of juvenile pickpockets.

Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Green Gables*. New York: Yearling, 1984. (Grade 3-6). Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, brother and sister who live together at Green Gables, a farm in the village of Avonlea in Canada, decide to adopt a boy from an orphan asylum to be a helper on their farm. Through a series of mishaps, the person who ends up under their roof is a precocious 11-year-old girl named Anne Shirley.

LGBT Adoption

Garden, Nancy. *Holly's Secret*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux 2000. (Grade 4-6). When 11-year-old Holly starts middle school, she devises a plan to become sophisticated and feminine, change her name to Yvette, and hide the fact that her two moms are lesbians.

Families

Garden, Nancy and Sharon Wooding. *Molly's Family*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004. (Pre-K-Grade 3). While

preparing decorations for Open School Night, Molly and several of her classmates draw pictures of their families and discover that family means something different to each of them.

Parr, Todd. *The Family Book*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2003. (Pre-K-Grade 3). The *Family Book* celebrates different family types, all in a funny, silly, and reassuring way. Parr includes adopted families, step-families, one-parent families, and families with two parents of the same sex, as well as the traditional nuclear family.

Parnell, Peter. *And Tango Makes Three*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2005. (Pre-K-Grade 3). At New York City's Central Park Zoo, two male penguins fall in love and start a family by taking turns sitting on an abandoned egg until it hatches.

FILMS, VIDEOS and BROADCASTS

***Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America*. A film by Phil Bertelsen. Arts Engine, 2008, Co-production of ITVS, 2001. TRT: 65 mins.** As a black child adopted by white parents in the 1970s and raised in a predominantly white suburb, Director Phil Bertelsen's adolescence was shaped by fond memories of a loving family as well as by difficult periods of self-examination and self-doubt.

***Secrets and Lies*. A film by Mike Leigh. Siren Visual Entertainment, 2002. TRT: 142 mins.** After her adoptive parents die, a young black woman seeks out her natural birth mother only to discover she is white. Equally shocked to learn that her daughter she gave up for adoption is black, the birth mother insists it's a mistake. When she realizes the truth, she springs her newfound daughter on the rest of the family, resulting in chaos that leads to the revelation of a series of secrets and lies.

