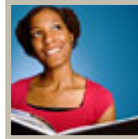


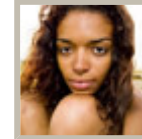
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## A family mixture

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*New adoption trends require open minds and hearts from all communities.*



By Carly Ritz  
Pic: [Getty Images](#)

Many upwardly mobile black couples are choosing to adopt non-related children, rather than take in their brother or sister's children.

There has in the past been an issue around the adoption of non-related children in black communities, despite the fact that it is common to take in related children such as nephews and nieces. However, according to Pam Wilson who heads the adoption team at Jo'burg Child Welfare, this attitude is changing.

These couples know they will be spending a lot of time, love and money on the child and they don't want the child to finally return to their family of origin after months of bonding and getting to know that child. However, Wilson adds that the trend is not reversing fast enough to cope with the large numbers of children currently needing adoption.

Nombulelo Mabombo, assistant director at Jo'burg Child Welfare, says that traditionally it has been expected that black families take care of their own communities and extended families. But more black families recognize that due to circumstances such as HIV/Aids

there are more and more orphaned children that need to be cared for. Mabombo says that black families are extending their support beyond their own communities to offer orphaned children a loving home.

### **Black child, white folks**

Marihet Infantino of The Child and Family Unit (CFU) at Jo'burg Child Welfare, says that white families have become more comfortable with adopting black children. This is particularly the situation with younger couples. In the case of white couples adopting, the extended family are usually the most vocal about their concerns of having a black niece or nephew or black grandchild.

Infantino says that there are numerous challenges that face white couples who adopt black children.

Infantino tells a story about an experience she had with a mother and her adoptive daughter. The mother struggled to deal with and care for her daughter's hair and when the child came home one day asking for blonde streaks, the mother decided to find a salon for African hair. The women at the salon explained to the mother how to care for her daughter's hair with certain treatments and products. This experience was stressful for the mother and is a small example of the complexities of such an adoption.

Language can also be a problem. In the case of an open adoption, where the birthmother still has contact with the child and the adoptive parents, some black children struggle to communicate with and relate to their birth


parents as they get older and more accustomed to their new environments.

'These children may also be labeled as "coconuts" by their peers at school,' says Infantino. This is a common phrase for black people who live more western lifestyles. In turn these children may start to feel alienated from their friends and their cultural heritage creating questions and concerns around their identity.

Infantino recommends the rainbow support group where inter-race adoption parents can get support and advise on how to care for their children as best as they can.

The challenges associated with adopting a child who is different to you should not make you hesitant to adopt. The orientation and screening process are designed to help and support families with their integration. For more info Jo'burg Child Welfare at [communications@jhbchildwelfare.org.za](mailto:communications@jhbchildwelfare.org.za) or visit [Jo'burg Child Welfare's website](#).

### Have you faced any cultural obstacles to adopting? Do you think attitudes are changing?



Article originally in  
**Parent24**  
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## Add your comment

- Vee** 9/2/2009 1:55 PM  
Attitudes are really changing. Im a black single professional and have adopted a beautiful little girl and I just cant imagine my life without her. My whole family have welcomed her with open arms, even people I thought would question my decision. That is I guess what makes it such a wonderful experiance for me. I have made a number of other black people through the adoption process. Really all these kids want is loving parents, love, care and protection. What you get in return is unmeasurable. My heart goes out to the biological mothers who have the courage to give up their kids, it must be the most difficult thing in the world! I might face challenges with my baby when she's older, but I know things will work out for the best, for now Im enjoying every minute and I leave the rest to The One Above!
- Ann** 9/2/2009 12:45 PM  
It is very positive that more black couples are adopting black children not related,it provides so much better opportunities for the orphans. But lets face it there are more orphans than willing people to adopt. Birth control and even sterilisation should be promoted under people who are HIV positive. That's the only way to bring the number of orphans down.
- jka** 9/2/2009 11:40 AM  
Parenting always has its challenging moments, and children will always be teased - whether they are called a "coconut" or "dumbo" or "four eyes" or whatever. These challenges should be considered minor in comparison to the benefits - the love of a child, the improved life that child now gets, the earth and its resources being saved from yet another human birth ... those who can afford to be parents, should adopt from the thousands of beautiful children waiting for placements.

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## Highlights



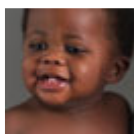
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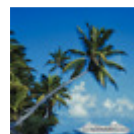
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