

# Winter 2009

T H E L A W O F F I C E O F R A Y M O N D W . G O D W I N

## INTERVIEW WITH AN ADOPTIVE MOM

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Ray is available to speak about adoption to your church, adoption organization or other group.

Please contact our office for more information.

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*Melissa and Chris are parents of three biracial children, two of whom were adopted through our office. Melissa took time to discuss with us some of the issues related to having a transracial family.*

*What led you to adopt transracially?*

Originally we were planning to adopt internationally, not domestically. We were looking at adopting from Thailand because they were one of the few countries that allowed people under 25 to adopt. (My husband, Chris, and I were married young and then ready to adopt young.) But soon after we began the process, the Thai government put an indefi-

nite hold on international adoptions, and so we turned to domestic adoption. Since we were already planning to adopt a child who didn't look like us, it seemed only natural to adopt biracial children.



**Carissa, Chris, Josiah, Melissa, Caleb**

*What did your families think about your adopting transracially?*

They were actually very supportive. Though, like many people, they had assumed that we would adopt white children, so it was a little bit of an adjustment when we told them we planned to adopt biracial children.

*Do you often get comments or strange looks in public?*

Not really. Since the kids are biracial, if it is just me and them out, people assume I am married to an African-American man. When the whole family is out together, we do get a lot of double takes.

*What have been some of the harder aspects of adopting*

See INTERVIEW on page 3

## DON'T FORGET YOUR HOME STUDY

Though you do not have to have a completed home study to begin the adoption process through our office, we do encourage you to complete your home study as quickly as possible.

While sometimes the adoption process involves a nerve-racking wait, many families are very quickly matched with a birth mother—sometimes in as little as a few weeks.

Expedited home studies are

an option, but often include extra fees.

Also, in a last minute situation when a birth mother is due soon or has a child who is already born, we definitely need a couple who has a completed home study on file.

You can complete your home study through an agency or through a private provider. However, we cannot accept home studies from the Department of

Social Services (DSS). DSS home studies are suitable for public adoptions only.

Private home studies cannot be used for DSS cases, nor can DSS home studies be used for private cases.

So while you should not feel obligated to have your home study completed before beginning the adoption process, you should make arrangements to have it completed as soon as possible.

# LITTLE BUNDLES OF JOY

It is a wonderful privilege to be able to place children in homes with their adoptive parents. We love when families stop by our office after placement to show off their child(ren) or send us pictures from home. If you have adopted through our office, we would love to see updated pictures of you and your child(ren).

Please enjoy these pictures of a few of the children who have recently been adopted through our office.



## INTERVIEW

From page 1

*transracially?*

Learning to do Carissa's hair. No one in my family has hair like hers.

*You do really cute things with her hair now; how did you learn?*

I ask the African-American women I know and then also spoke with the lady in the Whole Foods beauty department. She had been a hairdresser and had a lot of great suggestions on which natural products to use.

*What are some of the ways you discuss adoption with your children?*

Every year we celebrate their Adoption Day- the anniversary of their finalization hearing. On Adoption Day they get a gift, and I take a snack to their school to celebrate. We try to use Adoption Day as an opportunity to discuss adoption and what it means.

*How do you address issues of race with your children?*

We tell them that since their birth mother is white, and their birth father is black, they are brown. They understand the concept and usually call themselves brown, though Josiah is very light skinned and goes through phases of insisting that he is white.

*What advice would you offer parents who are considering adopting transracially?*

Educate yourself on the issues. For example, racial profiling by police officers is a real problem. I am going to have to teach my children how to interact in a world where African-American people are not always treated the same as white people.

Also, learn about the cultures of your children. I work hard to educate myself about African-American culture.

One specific thing I do is read books and blogs by African-American authors. I want to be familiar with African-American culture so that as our children grow, I can teach them about their heritage.



*"I am going to have to teach my children how to interact in a world where African-American people are not always treated the same as white people."*

## A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

*We also spoke with Josiah (age 6) and Caleb (age 4), Chris and Melissa's two oldest children. Here are some of their perspectives on adoption.*

*What is adoption?*

J- When they pour water on my head.

?- No, that was your baptism, what is adoption?

J- When I went and was carried and the judge gave me a bear.

*What is a birth mother?*

J- Someone you are inside of, like a woman, and then she spit me out.

?- And then what?

J- And then I went to the hospital.

?- And then what?

J- And then she gave me to Mama.

*Why don't you live with your birth mother?*

C- We just don't go to her house.

J- She gave birth to us and then gave us to Mama because she thought it would be nice for us to live with Mama and Daddy.

*What color are you?*

C- (looking at his shirt) Khaki!

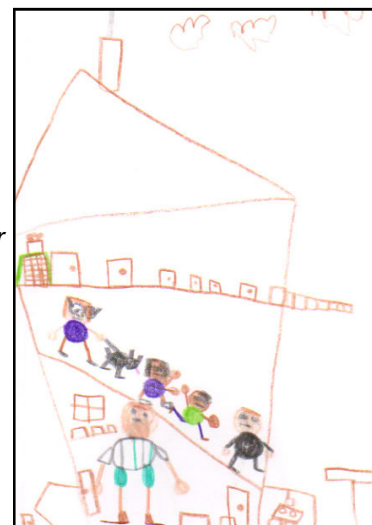
*What does Mr. Ray do at his office?*

J- Adopt people

*For Josiah and Caleb, it is very clear that being adopted is just another small part of their identity. They were much more interested in building a fort out of couch cushions than discussing adoption.*

*They do not seem to be concerned with the color of their skin or whose stomach they grew in.*

*For Josiah and Caleb, like many young adopted children, the parents they live with are their parents, and that is enough for them.*



Josiah's Family Portrait

## OFFICE NEWS – NEW ADDITIONS!

Our office has recently welcomed four new additions, though only two are on payroll.

**Julie Rau, Esq.** joined our office in July of this year as an Associate Attorney. After graduating from law school in 2001, she spent five years in private practice and then two years with the Department of Social Services (DSS). After the birth of her son, Josiah, in May, she left DSS and joined our practice. Julie has extensive experience in adoption along with other areas of family law. Welcome Julie!

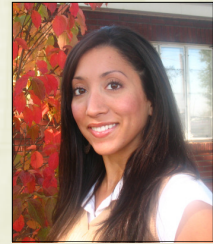
**Viviana Valdes** recently joined our staff as the new

Financial Assistant. She graduated from Bob Jones University in May 2009 with a degree in Accounting. Viviana is Cuban-American and fluent in Spanish. Her language expertise is especially helpful when interacting with Hispanic birth mothers. Viviana works on various financial matters for the office, including birth-mother budgeting and client accounts. Welcome Viviana!

Meredith transitioned out of our office in May as she welcomed her new son, **Elijah Mark**, born on May 17. He loves to drop by the office for extra love and attention. Meredith

stays home with Elijah and occasionally works from home doing miscellaneous projects for the office.

Amy also transitioned out of the office as she welcomed **Megan Grace**. Megan was born on October 30 and Amy is enjoying staying home with her. We look forward to their frequent visits!



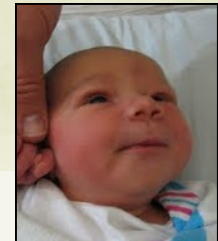
Viviana Valdes



Elijah Mark



Julie Rau



Megan Grace

## FEDERAL TAX CREDIT TO EXPIRE

Whenever potential adoptive parents ask our office about the cost of adoption, one of the first resources we mention is the Federal Adoption Tax Credit. For many families the tax credit is a necessary resource to offset the cost of adoption. Regrettably, unless renewed by Congress, the credit is set to expire in 2010.

*“Unless renewed by Congress, the Federal Adoption Tax Credit is set to expire in 2010.”*

First introduced in 2001, the Hope for Children Act increased the adoption tax credit to \$10,000 from \$5,000 and was indexed to keep up with inflation. It was introduced by a bipartisan coalition including South Carolina’s own Senator Jim DeMint.

The credit can be applied over five years, and as of 2009 is up to \$12,150. The tax credit has helped many families afford adoption and has allowed children to be placed in permanent, loving homes.

The original Hope for Children Act is set to expire December 31, 2010. Representative Joe Wilson

(SC) has introduced the Adoption Tax Relief Guarantee Act of 2009 (H.R.213), designed to prevent the expiration of the adoption tax credit. As of this publication, the bill continues to be reviewed by the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Please consider contacting your local senators and representatives to express your support for the Federal Adoption Tax Credit. Visit [www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml) to find contact information for your elected officials.

Let’s not allow this important resource to come to an end!

### Did You Know?

The Act’s original author was former Representative Tom Bliley. An adoptive father himself, Representative Bliley was a tireless advocate for adoption. He was not able to see the bill passed before his retirement, but in recognition of his diligent work, the tax credit was named the Tom Bliley Tax Credit in his honor.