

Foster Care Alumni Corner: Introducing Kevin Hofmann

Charlotte Osterman, the Institute for Human Services



Kevin Hofmann

**Trainer, Author, Public Speaker,
Consultant in Adoption, Agency
and CASA Volunteer**

Most young people we've introduced as trainers in the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP) have spent a significant number of years in foster care. Very few were adopted. Kevin Hofmann has traveled both roads on his child welfare journey. As an infant, he spent only a few months in foster care before his parents legally adopted him. He was among the first persons adopted transracially during the 1960's era. Kevin's experiences are compelling and are captured in a book he wrote entitled *Growing Up Black in White*. A relatively new OCWTP trainer, Kevin uses these experiences to train post-adoptive audiences statewide on issues focused on transracial and transcultural adoption.

I spent a few moments learning more about this passionate young man and his fondness for training. Here's what I discovered.

Charlotte Osterman: How long have you trained for the OCWTP? How widespread is your training audience?

Kevin Hofmann: I am going into my second year as an OCWTP trainer. The great thing about being transracially adopted is that this experience has given me a wonderful platform to speak on so many issues. I have spent the last five years speaking to foster parents, caseworkers, other child welfare professionals, and the general public. In addition to OCWTP and child welfare work, I also work with schools as a diversity consultant to help create a friendlier and more welcoming atmosphere for children of color. I enjoy traveling across the country training, lecturing and public speaking.

Charlotte: In what ways have you used your expertise as a transracial adoptee in training? What have been some of the outcomes?

Kevin: The experiences of the adoptee and especially the transracial adoptee are eerily quiet in the child welfare community. So I speak about the impact of race and culture in the transracial family and then I share from my experience as a transracial adoptee. My goal is to use my experience, both the good and the bad, to help create an easier path for today's adoptees. Some of the outcomes have been quite unexpected. My initial goal was to impact parents and caregivers with my training, but one interesting thing I've noticed is the increased awareness that comes to caseworkers as I speak freely and openly about race and how race impacts us all.

Charlotte: What about the issues of transracial/transcultural adoption do you want caseworkers, adoptive parents and foster caregivers to know?

Kevin: It comes down to the "3 C's." I want everyone involved in the child welfare system to know there are 3 things that are crucially important in the lives of transracial adoptees. The 3 C's are *Color Culture and Commitment*. All must understand we need to talk openly about color and race and prepare children of color for how they will be seen and viewed in this racialized world. It is imperative that transracial adoptees be given the opportunity to have a deep connection with their culture. Lastly, those helping to raise a transracial adoptee must understand the commitment involved to make sure color and culture are a part of their daily existence. These messages are very important in the training room.

Charlotte: What do you think are the benefits of your presence in a training room?

Kevin: I represent a minority in the child welfare system; rarely do adoptees get the opportunity to share in the way that I do. It is important for parents and professionals to see and understand we adoptees do grow up and the perspective we share is invaluable.

Charlotte: How has the experience of training for the OCWTP promoted your professional growth?

Kevin: I often joke and say that being a trainer is great because it is free therapy for me. Having to research the impact of race on children for my training has forced me to interpret how living and growing up as a child in a multicultural family has impacted me. If I just speak only on my experience without connecting the dots as to how that has affected me, that only gives parents and professionals an interesting story that may be entertaining for a few hours. But if I can tell that story while translating HOW that story is impacted by things like race, culture, and adoption issues, then the story becomes three dimensional and a wonderful way for others to learn how to do things better for the children growing up as foster or adopted children. As an OCWTP trainer, I have learned that those take-aways become primary and the story becomes secondary and trying to fit both in to training has caused me to grow professionally in ways I can't describe.