

## IDENTITY, HERITAGE AND LIFE STORY WORK

### 1. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### TRANSCRIPT OF IDENTITY HERITAGE & CULTURE AUDIO

Adoption specialist Savita De Sousa talks about the issues surrounding the adoption of a child of different ethnicity

*[Intro Music]*

#### **Savita De Sousa**

I'm Savita De Sousa and I work for the British Association of Adoption and Fostering. I think it's extremely important for any child, be they of a white ethnicity or a black ethnicity or an Asian ethnicity to actually know their cultural heritage, to actually know a little bit about their language and their faith, particularly if they have lost a birth family and they have become separated and they are going into a new family who is going to be welcoming them.

I think ethnicity, culture, is part of the identity of any child and I think when you have attachment as a secure base, then from it, a child is going to be able to explore their identity. For me the role of any new parent and particularly an adoptive parent is going to be giving a child who has lost their birth family a second chance in life. The chance to explore 'Who am I?' and all the different parts of me and what meaning can I give to this. Which parts would I like to keep, which parts would I like to put on the backburner? Which parts I'm not ready to find out about just yet. My life story book is going to be with me, what will I make of it? What's all this history about.

So I would say to any prospective adoptive parent, find me some role models that I can identify with, when I look in the mirror I am going to be looking in and seeing somebody different and that's OK but then I would want to see other people around me that are like me. You know, think about what it must be like, a child coming into your family asking 'What bits of me shall I keep secret and what bits of me shall I explore?' and when I go to school and don't look like my parents, what will children say to me... are you in foster care or are you adopted? How will I answer, how will you help me make sense of all this? I think that's one of the biggest challenges when you go to school. Adoption as an identity and then when you have child who doesn't look like you and is of a different skin colour, what are you going to do about it? How are you going to help this child to manage and cope with difference, the questions that he or she is going to be faced with in school. As soon as they enter the school gates, children notice differences. How do we make differences into a positive thing? How do we make sense of it and make it a part of our life. What meaning can we give to it? I think these are the questions that adopters need to ask themselves. Put yourself in the shoes of the child.

*[Outro Music]*