

KIDSAVE

# EMBRACE

PROJECT



GALLUP

Leslie Alexander  
Foundation





Growing up in a family of the same race or culture can make all the difference for Black children in foster care, providing them with the support they need to dream of – and achieve – a better future.

However, due to systemic racism in the child welfare system, such as racial bias, lack of diversity and representation, and structural racism, Black adults and families in the U.S. face unprecedented barriers to adopting and fostering children. At the same time, a disproportionate number of Black foster children await placement in a foster home and continue to hope for adoption.

To thoroughly understand and address these obstacles, Kidsave launched the [EMBRACE \(Expanding Meaningful Black Relationships And Creating Equity\) Project](#) to help improve the experience for Black youth and Black families interacting with the child welfare system.

In partnership with the [Gallup Center on Black Voices](#), the project is conducting a national research study to understand the complexities of the Black community's involvement in foster care, mentorship, and adoption. Over the past eight months, we've begun to unearth perceptions and obstacles that prevent Black Americans from engaging in foster care and adoption.

But this is merely the first step.

To achieve a world in which every child can grow up in a loving, supportive family surrounded by positive role models, we know more work needs to be done.

In addition to the research study, a diverse volunteer task force of policy professionals and child welfare advocates was formed to propose transformative policies and programs for Black children that leverage the project's findings. Through the EMBRACE Project's next phase, Kidsave hopes to establish clear steps that can be implemented to increase the number of Black families to mentor, foster, and adopt Black youth in foster care, including real change toward policy and practice recommendations in Los Angeles, Houston, DC, Atlanta and nationwide.

Join us to sustain the change we've already made and scale it to create more forever families and forever homes for Black Americans.

For more information, visit the EMBRACE Project at [kidsave.org/embrace](https://kidsave.org/embrace) or contact Kidsave's Strategic DEI Communications Manager, Shantay Armstrong, at [shantay@kidsave.org](mailto:shantay@kidsave.org).



*Expanding Meaningful  
Black Relationships  
And Creating Equity*

## **HELPING BLACK KIDS IN FOSTER CARE FIND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES & LIFELONG SUPPORT SYSTEMS. HELPING BLACK FAMILIES THRIVE.**

**In addition to being overrepresented in foster care, Black youth are underrepresented in rates of adoption.**

In 2020, Black children made up 22% of all kids in foster care in the U.S., even though they only represent 14% of the total child population (AFCARS, 2021).

Kidsave's EMBRACE project aims to address the overrepresentation of Black children in the foster care system due to systemic racism, to identify the barriers Black families face to mentorship and adoption, to provide solutions towards culturally competent care, and to cultivate solutions in practice and policy to improve outcomes for Black youth in foster care.

To do this, we are partnering with the Gallup Center on Black Voices, the Dave Thomas Foundation and the Hilton and Leslie Alexander Foundations to conduct a national research study to better understand the nuances of Black community involvement in foster care, mentorship and adoption.

In addition to the research study, a diverse, volunteer task force of policy professionals, people with lived experience and child welfare advocates was formed to propose transformative policies and programs for Black children that leverage the project's findings.

Join us to sustain the change we've already made, and scale it to create more forever families and forever homes for Black Americans.







## What are Kidsave's goals for challenging these issues and barriers?

Ultimately, our goal is to improve outcomes for Black youth and families who interact with the child welfare system. Research shows that when a child cannot be reunified with their biological families, it is vital for that child to continue to have a support system, whether that is a mentor, foster family, or adoptive family.

Additionally, research has shown that children of a different race from their adoptive parents or support system face unique challenges that their families often are not adequately trained, educated, and supported to handle.

**Kidsave aims to change this narrative and increase support for Black families as well as increase training for non-Black families towards culturally competent care.**

Some benefits of placing Black children with culturally competent parents or parents of the same race include:

- Reducing the foster care to prison pipeline
- A reduction in homelessness

## Interested in joining us?

We've started to uncover gaps within the foster care system through the EMBRACE project but we're just getting started. More work needs to be done to properly support Black Americans engaging with the foster care system.

You can support this effort to EMBRACE, get more involved and unlock the extraordinary potential of Black children in foster care by donating at **[kidsave.org/EMBRACE](https://kidsave.org/EMBRACE)**.

**EMBRACE**  
PROJECT



# Kidsave Study with Gallup Center for Black Voices: Embargoed Data

## Barriers Black Families Face

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Approximately, **one-quarter (25%)** of Black adults say the amount of **racial and ethnic discrimination** they may face is a major barrier to providing foster care and adoption .

The **amount of money required to foster** is also a uniquely significant factor among Black adults: **42%** say it's a major barrier, which ranks among the top five barriers for Black adults.

Potential families are also hesitant to adopt if **a child was removed from their home for questionable reasons**. This speaks to larger mistrust in the system.

## Quantitative Takeaways

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### **Mentoring is a gateway to adoption.**

Families who participate in mentorship programs are **7 times more likely to adopt** children from foster care.

Potential families need **more mental health support** around parenting children who have experienced trauma, grief or loss.

**16%** of Black Americans say they've **thought a lot about adopting a child** from U.S. foster care, but just haven't taken the first step (14%) or are waiting to start (2%).

Education, training and additional recruitment efforts could help them take the next step.

# THE EMBRACE PROJECT TASK FORCE



**Alain Datcher**

[LinkedIn](#)

Alain Datcher is the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Youth Commission, a youth-led advisory body overseeing one of the country's largest child welfare and juvenile justice systems. A native of Los Angeles, Alain has lived experience with the LA County foster care system.



**Charity Chandler-Cole**

[LinkedIn](#)

Charity Chandler-Cole is an Author, Scholar Activist, National Child Welfare Advocate and CEO of CASA of Los Angeles, (Court Appointed Special Advocates) which advocates for youth impacted by the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems. Born and raised in Los Angeles and having harshly endured its child welfare and juvenile justice systems.



**Darrell Booker**

[LinkedIn](#)

Darrell leads one of Microsoft's most important racial equity commitments, the Nonprofit Tech Acceleration of Black and African American Communities. Darrell also has an entrepreneurial spirit, co-founding a tech startup for the fitness industry used in hundreds of gyms across the U.S. and Canada.



**Deborah Bryant**

[LinkedIn](#)

Deborah Bryant serves as a Senior Advisor, providing policy and strategic leadership for expanding consumer protections in the private health insurance market at the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).



## **DeJuana S. Jernigan MSW, LCCA, LCPAA**

[LinkedIn](#)

DeJuana currently serves as the President and CEO of Arms Wide, a 46-year old child and family serving organization, committed to preserving and fulfilling families and finding and supporting permanent nurturing families for children experiencing foster care. DeJuana has over 25 years of child welfare experience with both the public and private sector and is active in the community.



## **Erica Thomas (Co-chair)**

[LinkedIn](#)

The Honorable Erica Thomas is one of the youngest individuals to have membership in any state's legislative body, and one of the first orphans to hold political office. She has served as a television and film producer, author, speaker, mentor, philanthropist, political consultant and Former Georgia State Representative, representing Georgia's 39th house district in Cobb County.



## **Keri Hope-Richmond**

[LinkedIn](#)

Keri Richmond is a change-maker, storyteller, and advocate for children and families. Her personal experience in the U.S. foster care system and enduring a broken adoption, has driven her to become a sought-after international speaker, podcast host, policy wonk, and advocate for foster care reform.



## **Lauren Davis (Co-Chair)**

[LinkedIn](#)

Lauren has more than a decade of experience in nonprofit communications, focused on digital strategy, email marketing, social media, video production, and feature writing. Lauren served as Director of Marketing and Communications at Kidsave for four years. Lauren now serves at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) in Washington D.C.





## Sunshine Best

Sunshine is an award-winning professional with a strong interest in addressing the most challenging needs in our communities. She's recognized as a fiercely driven, entrepreneurial-minded professional who effortlessly wears more hats than most could imagine: a scientist, activist, ethnobotanist, innovator, and foster care alum.



## Dr. Tamara N. Hunter

[LinkedIn](#)

Dr. Tamara N. Hunter has worked to improve the lives of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable children and families for more than two decades. She is the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, an advisory body to the County's Board of Supervisors on matters involving child welfare and juvenile justice-impacted children, youth, and families.

## EMBRACE TASK FORCE, Honorary Members



## Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

[LinkedIn](#)

Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell currently serves on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. As the daughter of parents who were public servants and a third-generation Angeleno, Mitchell leads with a deep understanding of the vital safety net LA County provides to millions of families and is committed to ensuring that all residents can thrive.



## Congresswoman Sydney-Kamlager Dove

[LinkedIn](#)

A fierce advocate for justice and families, Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove is proudly representing California's 37th Congressional District which covers a diverse area within Los Angeles County.



## FROM THE EMBRACE PROJECT TASK FORCE

Hear from Task Force member Charity Chandler-Cole on why the EMBRACE Project is important to her.



<https://youtu.be/6jY7zZ8yaX0>

# A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Right now, there are 86,645 Black children in foster care in America. In 2021, 54,000 kids were adopted from foster care. Only 9,000 were Black youth.

Despite making up only 14% of the U.S. child population, Black children make up 22% of the child population in foster care and are severely underrepresented in rates of adoption.

When Black children grow up surrounded by supportive and caring adults - especially adults from the Black community - they have the power to unlock their potential and achieve their dreams.

Black children in care face immense barriers to finding their forever families. Kidsave's EMBRACE Project is dedicated to understanding those barriers and enacting tangible change for Black Americans engaging with the foster care system.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Transracial adoption** - when a child is not the same race as either adoptive parent in a two-parent adoption or when the child and the parent are not the same race in a single-parent adoption.


- The proportion of transracial adoption has increased from 23% to 28% overall and from 21% to 33% for Black children, from 2005-2007 to 2017-2019.

**Waiting for adoption** - Children with a goal of adoption and/or whose parental rights have been terminated, excluding those whose parents' rights have been terminated, who are 16 years old and older, and who have a goal of emancipation.

- There were 113,582 children waiting to be adopted in 2021. 23,838 were Black children.

**Aging out** - a term used in the context of services for children and youth, also referred to as emancipation. Young people age out of foster care when they have reached the maximum age the state will support them in the foster system.

- On average, around 23,000 children each year will age out of the system without ever finding a forever family.



**Hidden foster care** – also called “shadow” foster care, is care that is provided outside of the formal system. Although well-intentioned and often stemming from a desire to keep kids “out of the system”, this practice leads to children raised by extended family members or family friends without any of the support or resources to address the impacts of trauma afforded within the formal foster care system.

- It is nearly impossible to track children in hidden foster care, but by some estimates it affects hundreds of thousands of children across the U.S. each year. There is no publicly available nationwide database of active foster parents, making it difficult, if not impossible, to adequately identify the current number of Black Americans who are providing foster care to Black youth in the United States.

## **BACKGROUND**

Finding adoptive homes that ensure long term connections and support for all children, but particularly for children of color, is a longstanding issue for child welfare agencies.

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was set up in 1994 to increase the pool of and recruit diverse foster and adoptive parents to better reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of children in out of home care. MEPA sought to prevent foster care agencies from denying a potential foster or adoptive parent on the basis of race, ethnicity or country or origin.

Black children are less likely to be adopted and a smaller portion of Black children achieve timely adoption than white children. In addition, Black children spend the most time in care before being adopted, regardless of their age at entry. Black children are also overrepresented in the foster care population and among those waiting for adoption compared with those who were adopted.

The alarming overrepresentation of Black youth in foster care systems across the United States demands immediate attention. For more information and resources, visit [kidsave.org/EMBRACE](https://kidsave.org/EMBRACE).



## SOURCES

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