

## Interracial Mother and Daughter Explore Race Through Their Relationship in New Co-authored Book

By Rachel M. Anderson, Contributing Writer

(Brooklyn, NY) - Race relations has been a hot topic in this country for quite some time now. Generations in fact, but it wasn't until the May 25, 2020 murder of a black man named George Floyd—at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer—that people really started talking about it with earnest.

What happened that day really angered Joni Schwartz, a professor of humanities at LaGuardia Community College in New York. “We know from George Floyd that racism is in our institutions,” says Schwartz, who has been a critical race theorist for decades.

Critical race theory is a field of intellectual inquiry that demonstrates the legal codification of racism in America. It is less about how racism manifests itself in interactions between individuals, and more concerned with how racism has been codified into the law.

In her latest book, *Learning to Disclose: A Journey of Transracial Adoption*, Schwartz and her co-author, daughter Rebecca Schwartz, point out how ingrained racism is in a country that has as its slogan, “United We Stand,” and how wrong it is.

“We want this book to bring up that we have a long way to go. Race and racism, even with the adoption system, is prevalent and there are so many contradictions,” says Joni, who acknowledges that she and her daughter are raising some really hard issues.

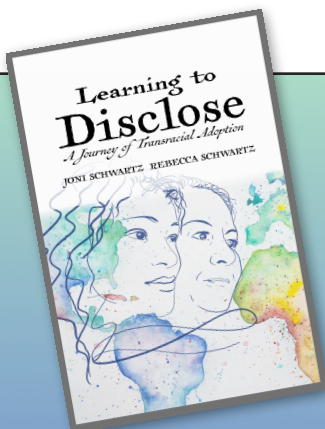
Joni, who is white, adopted Rebecca, who is black, from an adoption agency in Haiti when her daughter was nine-years-old. The authors explain in the introduction to their book that theirs is not a story about a white savior, but rather a collaborative auto-ethnography that analyzes personal experiences in the context of the surrounding culture.

The story begins with Rebecca's birthplace, Carrefour, Haiti, juxtaposed with the birth of the Haitian nation and international adoption as the privilege of colonialism and White supremacy. Also examined, colonialism and native erasure in Joni's birthplace, Minnetonka, Minnesota.

In the proceeding chapters, the authors share their research about racism. Also shared, their memories of time building their mother/daughter relationship, first when Rebecca was a child, then later as they have worked together, traveled, and spent time together on missionary trips.

While Joni is a college professor, Rebecca works in the field of international development, handling budget management, proposal writing, donor relations, partnership building and program implementation for MedAir, a Swiss humanitarian aid organization.

“Writing the book was originally a way for me to manage all I was experiencing as an adoptive mother. To help me to manage what I was feeling and going through and experiencing. Then I realized this story was not my story alone. This is Rebecca's story, and I couldn't write it unless she did it with me,” says Joni.



# Learning to Disclose

*A Journey of Transracial Adoption*

JONI SCHWARTZ REBECCA SCHWARTZ

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Rebecca adds that the writing wasn't always easy. "It's sharing your life and sharing your experiences, and going back to some unfortunate places. You have to learn how to open up in spite of fearing rejection, or fearing there will be criticism, or that people will not be accepting of you or your story. We had to learn as we were writing the book to kind of be okay with it. This is who we are and we're going to be open and vulnerable."

Early reviews for *Learning to Disclose* have been very favorable. "It is indeed rare to see such a dialogue on such difficult matters between an adoptive parent and an adoptee and I am especially impressed by how you together are able to historicize all these global and transnational histories of race, colonialism and nation building that you do together in relation to so many different places, cities, regions, countries and continents," said Tobias Hubinette, Adoption Researcher/Scholar.

"Well- done! Thank you for laying yourselves bare. The book is so edifying and you both are so vulnerable and candid about your work, which is both refreshing and inspiring!" said Andrea Francis, Professor.

"This book addresses the complexities of transracial adoption as it weaves together an evolving conversation between mother and daughter. Highlighted in its juxtaposition of racial issues and honesty in their relationship is the historical narrative derived from the countries where mother and daughter have lived or worked. This unique lens transforms and awakens the personal and historical. I highly recommend this fascinating and scholarly read. It is a page-turner for those who seek depth and insight for the racial justice issues of our day," said Sara Jorgensen, Program Director Rosie's Place.

The International Academic Publisher Peter Lang Inc. released *Learning to Disclose: A Journey of Transracial Adoption* in December 2020. The book is available for purchase online from [Amazon](#) and [Barnes and Noble](#), and can be ordered at bookstores everywhere.

More information is available on the website [JoniSchwartz.com](http://JoniSchwartz.com).

### About the Authors

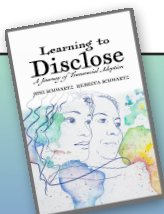
Joni Schwartz is professor of humanities at LaGuardia Community College, the City University of New York, a critical researcher, social activist scholar, mother, and grandmother. She has also co-authored several books involving race relations in America.

*Learning to Disclose: A Transracial Adoption* is a book she co-wrote with her daughter, Rebecca Schwartz. She is also the co-editor of *Race, Education, and Reintegrating Formerly Incarcerated Citizens: Counterstories & Counterspaces*, author of 24 scholarly publications, and producer of two documentaries.



Rebecca Schwartz holds a B.S. in communications and a M.S. in international affairs from New York University. Her work as a humanitarian encompasses implementing emergency response programs in developing countries. She is currently an adjunct lecturer at LaGuardia Community College, and co-author of *Learning to Disclose: A Transracial Adoption*, a book she co-wrote with her mother, Joni Schwartz.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This feature article and the accompanying photography are available for your use copyright free and cost-free. If you would like to arrange an interview of your own with Joni Schwartz and/or Rebecca Schwartz, contact Rachel M. Anderson, Publicist, at 952-240-2513 or [rachel@rmapublicity.com](mailto:rachel@rmapublicity.com).*



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