

WINTER 2022

# THE AKA CONNECTION



## ADOPTION KNOWLEDGE AFFILIATES

*essential wisdom ► lifelong support*

### From the President's Desk

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Dear Members,

2021 was another roller coaster year with many uncertainties. I hope you were able to weather it and I hope this finds you in good health as we begin the new year.

Despite the uncertainties, AKA had another successful year, thanks to a very active Board and the skills of our Executive Director. Our Virtual Conference was a great success thanks to the hard work of our Executive Director, Marci Purcell, the Conference Committee and the Chair, Ty Cliffler. The support groups are very active, and the Quarterly Meetings have been popular.

And remember, January is an important month for us in that the Board will nominate new applicants and the membership will vote on those nominees and the new Board will be installed in February.

### OVERVIEW:

- President's Letter
- Guest Blogger: Akara Skye
- Resource Spotlight
- Reading Recommendations
- Upcoming Events
- Resources Around the Web
- Welcome New Members!
- Thank You, Supporters!
- Conference Wrap-Up Info

On behalf of the Board and our Executive Director, I wish to express our gratitude to those of you who volunteered and to those who supported us financially! These two go hand to glove.

In closing, I hope this New Year will bring what your heart most desires!

In Gratitude,

Rod

# SANTA CLAUS IS DEAD

BY AKARA SKYE

Reprinted with permission from Adoptee Voices E-Zine, *Solstice*, the December 2021 Issue.

As a child, Christmas was the ultimate celebration. The feeling of overwhelming joy and anticipation. The enticing smells of gingerbread, peppermint, sugar cookies, snickerdoodles, hot cocoa, and buttered rum.

My mom went to great lengths decorating the house. Hand-stitched stockings, vintage glass ornaments, nativity scene, snow globes, garlands, and wreaths. Twinkling tinsel on the tree, along with blinking-colored lights. My dad also enjoyed his own form of decorating, building the elaborate train set which snaked around the tree.

Picking the perfect Christmas tree, which, in hindsight, was never perfect. We hauled the heavy, much-too-large tree into the house, where, once festively adorned, it took center stage in the cozy den. The warmth of the fireplace enveloped the holiday merriment and festivities.

Christmas was full of amazement. That is, before I learned I was adopted. Looking back now, I wonder, had I missed the warning signs?

More often than not, the red caboose got stuck in the fallen icicles that my dad had so carefully and painstakingly placed on the tree earlier in the day. The tree's prickly pine needles scratched my arms, producing painful red welts on my wintry pale skin, an allergic reaction to pine.

I was not permitted in the den for any length of time, due to my allergies. I was banished into the living room, which was in front of the house, forever austere and cold. Except for me, no one spent time there at Christmas. The living room housed the shiny, sparkly, silver aluminum tree, complete with rotating color wheel, the heavy, faded curtains open to reveal to the neighbors the festive façade that was my Christmas.

Rather than spend Christmas Eve banished in the cold living room, I went outside to hear the silence and feel the cold snow on my face, my fingers frosted over from building the ragged snow man without the nose.

I returned inside and changed into my soft, well-washed flannel pajamas, complete with my fuzzy red socks. For a moment, I was allowed into the den. I sat in front of the crackling fire and draped my legs with grandma's handmade quilt. The quilt was in its last days, ragged and torn, and smelled of cedar due to its storage throughout the year. Was I feeling the snuggly comfort of love, affection, and belonging? It seemed fleeting.

Where did my amazement of Christmas go?

At the age of twelve, I made a jarring discovery that dramatically changed the trajectory of my life: I was adopted. Upon discovering this, I



Continued on next page



was frozen in time, paralyzed with shock and shame. My memories of any “happy” moments were tossed out, along with my innocence. It was time for me to view everything with scrutiny, under a different lens.

The following Christmas, things remained the same on the outside, but were very different on the inside. My mom still painstakingly adorned the house, and my dad patiently assembled the train set, but that was nothing but a ritual to mask the lack of emotions and love. The glimmers of what I thought was love were a charade. The “true gift of Christmas” and all its amazement was gone. Perhaps it was never there.

I had fooled myself into believing I was part of my adopted family. It was all a joke to everyone but me. My relatives must have thought how ridiculous it was to pretend “she” was part of the family. Embarrassed and ashamed, I eventually disengaged; a great gift to all parties involved. I didn’t belong.

Estranged from my adopted family and

shunned by my birth family, I know full well that I will be alone. Even if there is an unexpected invitation from a friend to spend the holidays with them, I will decline. I would be spending hours on end listening to family stories, yet another family to which I do not belong. Remember when Billy got suspended? Remember when Aunt Eileen forgot to thaw the turkey? It would be the familiar, miserable sense of an alien in foreign territory, and I would only flee the evening as soon as possible.

I avoid any activity that may bring up the ugly, distorted scenes of past Christmases. Society tells me I should be grateful and take what I can get. I am lucky. Trauma teaches me that I am unloved and discarded. It’s been said you create your family. Does that include the way my adopted parents created theirs?

I crawl into my bed and wait for the holidays to pass. A never-ending dread. Santa Claus is dead.

*Akara is an Adoptee Rights Advocate. She was born, adopted, and raised in the heart of Texas. Frustrated with not being heard, and done with being polite, she writes to help heal the trauma of relinquishment.*





# Resource Spotlight

## Reunion Land Bookshelves

link to popular, well-told and engaging books from and about the adoption, donor-conceived, & foster care communities, curated by booklovers. We offer 18 categories/bookshelves embracing estrangement and recovery themes as well.

**ABOUT US.** We curate these online shelves to align with major conference and reading club book lists in the adoption/donor-conception world. Reunion Land began as an anthology manuscript in the 1990s, and then was reborn as "virtual bookshelves" of over 500 fiction and non-fiction links in 2014-16 that were shared through social media. Unlike some online booksellers, we are independent of any adoption agency, ART clinic, or Amazon, instead supporting local booksellers through Bookshop. Find us here:

<https://bookshop.org/shop/reunionlandpress>

## Recommended Reading

### **What White Parents Should Know about Transracial Adoption: An Adoptee's Perspective on Its History, Nuances, and Practices**

*by Melissa Guida-Richards*

### **Rock Memoir: Book 1 of The Birth-Fathers' Club Series**

*by Michele Kriegman*

### **God and Jetfire: Confessions of a Birth Mother**

*by Amy Seek*



## Upcoming Events

RSVP to

[aka@adoptionknowledge.org](mailto:aka@adoptionknowledge.org)

### AKA Peer Support Groups - 7 pm Central Time

Birth/First Parent Group, 2nd Tues of the month

DNA Discovery Group, 2nd Thurs of the month

Adoptive Parent Group, 3rd Mon of the month

Male Adoptee Group, 3rd Wed of the month

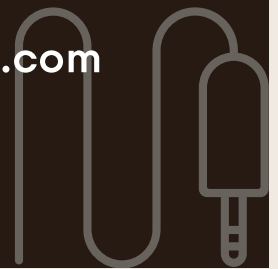
Women Adoptee Group, Last Tues of the month

AKA Book Club, 4th Thurs of the month



## resources from around the web

- National Alliance for Adoptee Equality
- Adoptee Voices - <https://adoptee-voices.com>
- Adoption Truth & Transparency Worldwide Information Network - [adoptiontruth.org](http://adoptiontruth.org)
- Once Upon a Time in Adopteeland - [www.onceuponatimeinadopteeland.com](http://www.onceuponatimeinadopteeland.com)



# Welcome

*Thank You!*

## NEW & RETURNING AKA MEMBERS 2021

Fiona McInally  
Jana Gross  
P Lynch  
Dirk Uphoff  
Lindsey Kohn  
Joanne Wells  
Gail Whitehead

Rose Blanchard  
Cheryl Dragel  
Heena Khan  
Kate Coffield  
Barbara Freedgood  
Albert Blankenship  
Jennifer Cochran-Green

Sharon Cummins  
Darcy Mittelstaedt  
Susan Burek  
Daryn Watson  
Kathie Otte  
Sheri Williams  
Natalie Silvestro

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becoming a member?  
Visit our website  
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Join the AKA  
Board! Want  
to join our dynamic  
team doing good work for  
the adoption community?  
We are accepting Board  
Member applications  
now. Email us for  
details

[aka@adoptionknowledge.org](mailto:aka@adoptionknowledge.org)

*In this season of giving we want to extend a huge and heartfelt thank you to everyone who has shown generosity to AKA over our thirty years! Whether you are a new supporter or have been with us since the early days, we feel your support every day through the services we are able to provide. Thank you so much! Here's to many more years of service from Adoption Knowledge Affiliates!*



# CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

## Conference Recordings

If you are a 2021 AKA virtual conference attendee, the conference session recordings are available to you on the Conference Portal for viewing as part of your registration! To access the recordings, go to the "Conference Portal" tab and click on the "Presentation Recordings" tab just as you did for the live conference. Find the desired presentation on the schedule on the left-hand side of the page, then click on the corresponding recording link on the right. These are hosted on a private YouTube Channel area and are for conference registrants only. Be aware, not all content was recorded. If you have difficulties accessing the content, please reach out to us at [aka@adoptionknowledge.org](mailto:aka@adoptionknowledge.org). We are happy to be of assistance.

## Conference Feedback

If you attended the conference and haven't yet completed the Overall Conference Evaluation please do so at your earliest convenience. We will be using this information for future planning and to provide valuable feedback to our presenters. Visit the link to share your experience: <https://forms.gle/KasqvHUr1onPrx979>

We sincerely hope you enjoyed the conference and that you continue to engage with Adoption Knowledge Affiliates' services and programming throughout the year. We hope to see you at our conference in the future! Thank you for making our event a huge success!

Ty Cliffler, Conference Chair, 2021  
& the AKA Conference Committee



# Ways to Support AKA in 2022!



Since 1992, AKA has offered essential knowledge and lifelong support recognizing adoption as a complex, on-going and intergenerational process. We now serve people connected to adoption, foster care, and the DNA discovery community, with all the complexities and variations present in those experiences. We have been connecting, supporting, and educating people for 30 years and counting!

## Join or Renew your AKA Membership!



## Shop at AmazonSmile

and Amazon will make a donation to:  
Adoption Knowledge  
Affiliates



Select Adoption Knowledge Affiliates as your Amazon Smile charity and a percentage of your Amazon purchase will be donated to AKA at no charge to you.

## Big News! You Shop, We Win! Help AKA for FREE

*Shop at any of 2300 online stores. It is fast and automatic with the iGive button, the iPhone/iPad or Android app or through the iGive website. You never pay more and the iGive website shows how much you are raising before you buy.*

*Just about anything you spend through iGive counts including VRBO & hotel stays as well as traditional retail establishments. iGive takes care of the details and sends the money to AKA with donations ranging from .5% to 20% depending on the store with the average shopper raising more than \$100/year.*

### To sign up, follow these steps:

1. Go to [iGive.com/Adoptionknowledgeaffiliates](https://iGive.com/Adoptionknowledgeaffiliates)
2. Enter your information or login with Facebook to join iGive.
3. Install the iGive extension/button on your web browser or download the app for a mobile device. Participating stores will automatically know you want them to donate to AKA for your purchase. If you don't want to install the button or app, simply go to [iGive.com](https://iGive.com)
4. **Shop!**



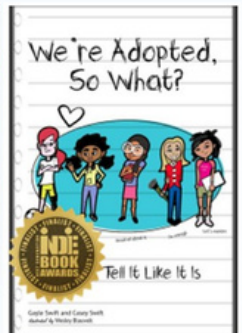
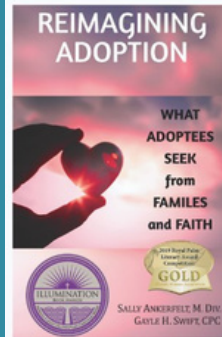


# Our 2021 Conference Supporters



ADOPTION MATTERS

*Read. Listen. Learn.*



Growing Intentional families Together, LLC  
GIFTfamilyservices.com



## Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services<sup>SM</sup>

*Thank  
you!*



## Driscoll Health Plan



### Heart of Texas Home Studies

Becca King, LCSW  
Andrea Farrell, LCSW

[www.heartoftxhs.com](http://www.heartoftxhs.com)

### Rod Lind, M.A., NCC, LPC



Telementalhealth Certified  
[rod.lind@enlighteningdiscovery.com](mailto:rod.lind@enlighteningdiscovery.com)  
[www.enlighteningdiscovery.com](http://www.enlighteningdiscovery.com)

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Virtual only



*"I help adoptees and birth/natural parents navigate their way through their experiences of relinquishment and reunion by providing them the skills and necessary guidance so they can use those skills to be at peace with themselves and their world."*

# Our 2021 Conference Advertisers

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*Thank  
you!*

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