

**Black Adoption Placement and Research Center:
25 Years of Delivering Culturally-Responsive Adoption and Foster Care
Services**

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Introduction

Black Adoption Placement and Research Center (BAPRC) was founded in 1983 as an independent non-profit organization delivering culturally-specific adoption and foster care services. BAPRC is licensed to serve families residing in fourteen Northern California counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Yolo. The agency facilitates adoption and foster care placements between children in county child welfare systems and prospective adoptive and/or foster care families living in the community. The mission of BAPRC is to recruit, train, and certify families for the placement of African-American and all children waiting for permanent homes. In adherence with state and federal laws, BAPRC does not discriminate and offers its services to all children and families. The agency understands that the need for prospective foster and adoptive families is urgent and collaborates with county social services departments to locate and secure placements that are in the best interest of the children.

BAPRC has been physically located in several Oakland buildings over its 25-year history. Since 2004 the organization has been housed in a large single story office building (7801 Edgewater Drive in Oakland, California) shared with another nonprofit organization delivering children and family services (Families First). The welcoming office space includes furniture (donated by long-time Board member Odell Johnson), photographs of African-American children and families playing and laughing, reading materials that include *Psychology Today*, *Heart and Soul*, and *Black Business Newspaper*, and a resource center of books and videos related to parenting, the foster care and adoption process, children's storybooks that help children make sense of their new families and experiences, and videos that relate a child's perspective of their experiences growing up without their birth families.

The numerous awards on the office walls illustrate how the organization has been recognized over the years by the Mayor of Oakland, California's Governor and the Secretary of State. Also displayed are donor plaques from BAPRC's Annual Appeal Campaigns dating back to 1991. The large conference room includes poster-sized photographs of children decorating the room. These pictures provide detail of the children's faces and depict the many shades of African-American children.

Governance and Staff

BAPRC is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors that currently consists of nine members. The group is considered to be a prestigious Board and many of those connected with BAPRC have held significant positions in the community. Past and current board members represent a variety of professional backgrounds that range from a College President to a CEO of a private company to the Chief Assistant Attorney for the City of Oakland. The Board reflects how the community has embraced and supported the organization.

While the Board has played a prominent role since the beginning of the agency, it has reduced its size from a high of twenty-one members in the 1990s to the current nine-member Board in 2008. This reflects the movement of the Board from a working-board to a policy board. Early in the agency's history, a 21-member Board was needed to help restructure the organization and was highly engaged in the daily activities of BAPRC. Once the organization was healthy, the Board was reduced in relation to its new roles and responsibilities. Today, the Board is largely responsible for strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, and political advocacy.

The Board meets monthly and includes several standing committees. The Finance and Fundraising Committee focus on developing and implementing fundraising events throughout

the calendar year, including phon-a-thons, benefit concerts, direct mailing campaigns, and special events (Annual Night for Children and the holiday reception). In addition to fundraising activities, this committee coordinates celebrations, annual picnics and holiday toy drives. The Development Committee stays abreast of local foundation funding opportunities and helps build relationships between BAPRC and donors, with a special emphasis on agency marketing. The Child Welfare Committee keeps abreast of what is happening in the larger child welfare community and how policy changes could affect BAPRC, including the coordination of advocacy activities.

The Executive Director, who works closely with the Board, is responsible for daily program oversight, management and leadership. BAPRC currently employs four full-time employees who hold the positions of Executive Director, Associate Director, Accounting Manager and Receptionist/Program Assistant. In the past the agency has employed up to twenty employees; however, budget cuts and changes in financing over the past decade have resulted in staffing cuts. BAPRC contracts with several MSW social workers, one family preparation trainer, and one recruiter (several are former employees). Volunteers also play a critical role for BAPRC and are supervised by the Executive Director or Associate Director.

Description of Services

BAPRC operates two programs: 1) Fost-Adopt and 2) Foster Care. In the Fost/Adopt program, a child is placed with a family that is willing to adopt the child when s/he becomes legally available. This program offers a gradual transition to adoption for both the child and the prospective parents. The Foster Care program, also called Bridge to Permanency, places a child is placed with a family to provide a safe, structured, and possibly permanent situation in preparation for ultimate permanency. This can occur through family reunification or adoption.

The emphasis of the Bridge to Permanency program is to provide children with a therapeutic, healing environment while a permanent living solution is identified.

BAPRC is also licensed to provide foster and adoption services for “special needs” populations. BAPRC uses the term “special needs” for children who fall under two categories: 1) children who have or are at-risk for developing medical, emotional, mental or learning conditions that may require intensive or ongoing services or children who fall into certain demographic categories that are over represented in the foster care system such as minority children and children over two years of age, and 2) children who are part of a sibling group, were prenatally drug-exposed, have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse and/or are a child of color.

The families that BAPRC serve dispel many of the myths about adoptive parents. BAPRC has advocated for the inclusion of non-traditional families by delivering services to many different types of families such as single adults and couples, working and retired parents, homeowners and home renters, families with diverse levels of income, families of different races and ethnicities, and families that already have children or those who are seeking to become new parents. The families who are accepted into BAPRC programs are all assessed in terms of being stable, law abiding citizens, regardless of their individual characteristics.

BAPRC employs a seven phase program for all prospective foster and/or adoptive parent(s) prior to being approved for placement. These phases are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: BAPRC's Family-Finding Process

- I. Orientation and Intake: Phase I involves attendance at an informational meeting and prospective parents complete an intake form. After their forms are reviewed, prospective parents are contacted for an initial interview.
- II. Application: Phase II involves the completion of an application packet. The packet includes a criminal record statement, fingerprints, employment verification, statement of income, a medical assessment form, CPR/First Aid certification for children and infants, copies of birth certificates, marriage licenses, divorce decree, home floor plan, disaster plan, and the contact information for four references.
- III. Training: Once a family has completed the application phase and is approved to continue with the process, they enroll in Phase III to complete BAPRC's training program. The 21-hour course is based on the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) Training. It includes lessons on children and attachment, birth family connections, discipline, understanding the multiple impacts that fostering and adoption can have on families and children, as well as other topics. The classes are held on Saturdays and weeknights and are co-facilitated by the Associate Director and a foster or adoptive parent.
- IV. Home Study: The Home Study and Certification Process of Phase IV involves a series of scheduled interviews and assessments in the prospective parent's home. These studies are conducted by BAPRC social workers and culminate in a home certification if the home is determined to be an appropriate placement.
- V. Child Search: Phase V includes the Child Search and Matching Process, in which the prospective parents attend adoption exchange meetings with county representatives, look through county photo albums of children available for foster care and/or adoption, and view the television show *Adoption Today* which introduces families to children needing placement. This phase also includes the Pre-Placement Process in which the parents learn more about the background (family, medical history, etc.) of the child(ren) that they are interested in pursuing. Once a child has been selected for placement, the prospective parents are accompanied by a BAPRC representative to meet the child in person. If interest continues, regular visits with the child are scheduled and increase in length over time.
- VI. Post-Placement: The Phase VI post-placement services are initiated after a child is placed in a foster and/or adoptive home. These services consist of regular home consultations with a BAPRC social worker, referrals to community resources, invitations to attend family events, opportunities to attend parent education workshops and support groups hosted by BAPRC, and access to the BAPRC resource library.
- VII. Finalization: Phase VII relates to the finalization of a permanent placement where the child legally becomes the child of the adoptive parents. A new birth certificate is issued and an official court hearing is scheduled. Parents apply for and receive financial benefits from the Adoption Assistance Program which offers financial and medical support as needed, and adoption tax credit is made available once placement is finalized.

The history of BAPRC can be divided into four distinct stages of development. The first stage tells the story of how a group of individuals concerned about the growing numbers of African-American children lingering in the public foster care system came together to develop an organization to address the problem by creating an organization, raising money, and ultimately contributing to BAPRC's growth and development. The second stage represents new Board leadership, the creation of formal agency policies and procedures, the entrance of a new Executive Director, and continuing agency expansion. The third stage includes the transition to new leadership, increased collaboration with other organizations, enhanced use of media and marketing, the development of a new strategic plan, and continuing agency growth. The most recent stage includes entrance into the 21st Century, a time in which the changes in financing required that BAPRC reduce programs and staff positions while continuing to deliver the same high quality of services.

Early Beginnings (1980-1984)

In the late 1970s an ad hoc group of lay and professional people living and working in Oakland's African-American community came together to discuss the plight of African-American children in the foster care system. There was growing concern about the large numbers of African-American children entering but not exiting the public foster care system. Historically, formal adoptions were rare in the African-American community because an extended family support system was often available for families experiencing financial troubles and needing assistance with their families. For example, extended families helped by putting an extra plate at the dinner table or inviting a child from the South to the North to live with relatives.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the local African-American community began to see a large number of Vietnam War veterans returning with drug addictions, contributing to the rise of drug dealing and violence, often making it unsafe for extended families to provide their traditional form of support. Many veterans were unable to reconnect with their families thereby reducing the strength of the family units. It was also during this time that crack cocaine reached epidemic proportions in the African-American community, resulting in the birth of many crack-addicted babies.

The impact of drugs and violence on children were not unique to the Bay Area. Around the country, African-American children were entering the child welfare foster care system in growing numbers. Other factors that influenced length of stay in foster care included institutional racism and lack of cultural competence. Public child welfare agencies were often unwilling to place children in homes that deviated from the norm of a two-parent family where the mother was under the age of 55 and the family income was well above the national poverty level¹. African-American families interested in adopting African-American children were often not considered as viable placements because they did not fit this norm. There were also other barriers that included adoption fees, extensive paperwork, and cultural insensitivity that kept African-Americans from adopting, ultimately leading to the perception of a lack of African-American family interest in adoption².

As a result of all of these challenges and the perception that there were few appropriate culturally-specific placements, African-American children were often placed in Caucasian families that were located outside of the immediate Bay Area. The distance resulted in the

¹ Child Welfare (1984). *Child Welfare Research Note #3*.

² Beggs, M. (1992). *Preserving the Cultural Legacy: Black Adoption Placement and Research Center*. San Francisco, CA: Zellerbach Family Fund.

further breakdown of family networks and the children often lost touch with members of their birth families. In addition, prospective African-American adoptive parents and those who had already adopted children expressed frustration with the approach of local adoption agencies and often went outside of the Bay Area (including other states) to find children to adopt. This pattern was especially troubling because of the large number of children available for adoption in the Bay Area. Pat Reynolds, past Executive Director of BAPRC, recalls that African-American families are often leery of white institutions because of longstanding racist and unwelcoming attitudes. African-American families view the county child welfare system as a white agency and therefore are often unwilling to approach them for adopting children.

The growing number of African-American children languishing in the public child welfare system stimulated considerable dialogue around the country about how to meet the needs of these children. Oakland's response was to bring together a group of social workers and concerned citizens to develop a specialized community-based response to the need for culturally-specific foster/adoption placements within the African-American community. Two child welfare advocates, Alice Washington and Cynthia Turner, developed a concept paper in 1981 that described the potential mission and vision of a new culturally-specific foster care and adoption agency. The original concept paper was used in grant proposals to local foundations and reflected the following elements: 1) all children are adoptable and have a right to a permanent home, 2) all Black children can be placed in Black homes because much to contrary belief, Black families do adopt, 3) a culturally sensitive staff, a streamlined adoption process, a no-waiting policy, no costly fees, and convenient business hours will assist families in completing the process, 4) support services to the family once the placement is made is vital, and 5) families

need not own their homes, have large bank accounts or earn large incomes to adopt (the capacity to love and rear the child as their own is our major concern)³.

Using the concept paper to guide the vision, the Bay Area Black United Fund provided the working group with a small planning grant and the San Francisco Foundation awarded the group a matching grant of \$52,510 to hire an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. The Beth Eden Missionary Baptist Church provided a furnished office space and paid for their utilities for the five years that the agency resided in this location.

The group proceeded to build a Board of Directors committed to the goals and objectives of the agency. Many of these founding Board members came from the initial working group. The Board completed the preliminary work necessary for establishing and formalizing the agency, given the controversial issues of race, culture and adoption. Identifying people and funding entities who were willing to publicly support the agency's mission was difficult. At the same time, pressure was coming from African-American professionals (particularly social workers) who were increasingly concerned about the number of African-American children adopted by white families and taken to cities where the African-American community was not well represented. A large number of Oakland's African-American community viewed this as a problem and decided that action was needed.

As a member of the founding group, Cynthia Turner agreed to serve as interim Executive Director position of the new agency on July 1, 1983. The Mission of BAPRC was fourfold: 1) to place through adoption and foster care Black children of all ages in permanent, loving Black homes, 2) to advocate for Black children languishing in public foster care systems, 3) to train child welfare and other professionals in the area of special needs and, 4) to assist the state and

³ Turner, C. (1984). Philosophy – Mission Statement for Black Adoption Placement and Research Center.

other agencies with development of a comprehensive minority adoption program in the Bay area. In October 1983 the agency was officially incorporated as a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization with the name of The Black Adoptions Placement and Research Center (BAPRC) and launched at its first Open House on October 9, 1983. Cynthia accepted donations for furniture (United Way and the Bank of America), began developing a brochure describing the agency's services, worked with the Board to establish governance procedures, and began writing grant proposals to local foundations.

In November 1983 Cynthia Turner turned over the professional leadership role to a permanent Executive Director, Alice Washington. As an employee of Coleman Advocates (a San Francisco nonprofit advocacy organization), Alice had worked closely with Cynthia to establish BAPRC. Alice decided to leave her job to assume the Executive Director position and step down from the BAPRC Board. On December 12, 1983 BAPRC was licensed by the State of California to "place Black and mixed Black children for adoption and to accept relinquishments for adoption." At this time, 54% of Alameda County's foster children were identified as Black⁴.

In 1983, there were 33,625 children in California's foster care system and 28% were African-American. In its first year of operations, BAPRC had four employees. The Executive Director (an MSW) was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the agency, the Senior Social Worker Supervisor coordinated the program and contract social workers as well as the informational and educational sessions. The Administrative Assistant served as the office manager and handled all adoption inquiries. BAPRC also contracted with social workers on an as-needed basis to conduct home studies or provide post-placement supervision.

⁴ Beggs, M. (1992). *Preserving the Cultural Legacy: Black Adoption Placement and Research Center*. San Francisco, CA: Zellerbach Family Fund.

In early 1984 Alice Washington and the Board began identifying future funding options for BAPRC. They discussed fee for adoption placement but the Board was split on this issue. Alice Washington researched the pros and cons of charging fees and reported back to the Board in May 1984. The potential pros included: 1) revenue, 2) not charging a fee would not alter the fact that some agencies ignore many children who are waiting for placement, 3) people tend to value services that they pay for. The cons identified were: 1) child's needs become secondary, 2) fees perpetuate the myth that one must always pay to adopt, 3) fees promote a class system, 4) fees cover only a fraction of the agency's cost in relation to placing children for adoption, 5) fees look like double taxation, and 6) fees create a link with the slave experience. While some board members viewed fees as a viable way to meet some of the financial burdens of the agency, others were sensitive to the community perception of buying African-American children. The Board remained split on the topic and an ad hoc committee was formed to further explore the subject.

In April 1984, BAPRC held its first informational meeting for potential couples interested in becoming foster/adoptive parents. Three couples attended the meeting and two were eager to begin the process. In May BAPRC hosted a table at an Adoption Fair in Oakland and 40 families signed up for future information. BAPRC made its first placement of a 5-week old baby girl to a young couple from San Francisco on June 12, 1984.

By the end of 1984, BAPRC had received \$51,900 from the San Francisco Foundation for organizational development and recruitment activities in FY 1984/85. They had also generated \$5000 from the National Center for technical assistance and a \$5000 planning grant from the Bay Area Black United Fund. The Board Finance Committee had hosted its first fundraising event. They purchased a block of tickets to a local performance and Board members sold these tickets for a profit. In addition, the Board developed with Alice a three-year strategic

plan (1985-1988) that included the following six components: 1) planning and evaluation of services, 2) management and administration of a full time social worker (to be hired in 1988) and a cadre of 10 volunteers, 3) resource development aimed at generating income from sources other than foundations and corporations, 4) programs and services aimed at placing children and certifying professionals to provide post-placement services 5) training center for social workers related to special needs adoption in the bay area, and 6) outreach to develop a comprehensive public relations program.

The Growing Years (1985-1993)

BAPRC continued to expand its services and the Board ultimately decided to establish a system of fees. The Board's ad hoc Fee Committee recommended the fee of \$1000 per placement. The agency also expanded its services by accepting relinquishments from unwed and pregnant mothers. The agency presented this option as objectively as possible, without taking a pro-life or anti-abortion stance. This program was called the Unwed Pregnant Mother's Program. BAPRC brochures were placed in doctor's offices and schools.

The financial resources of BAPRC also expanded in 1985 with a number of grants and gifts from local foundations and corporations. For example, the agency received \$5000 from Van Loben Sels, \$5000 from the Hearst Family Fund, a two-year \$30,000 grant from the James Irvine Foundation, \$500 from Clorox, and \$1000 from the Maria Kip Orphanage. They engaged in several purchase-of-service contracts, one of which was with Illinois Family Service. The Finance and Fundraising Committee put together the agency's first annual picnic and initiated a direct mail campaign. They also received \$300 from Home Savings of America to help finance the creation of a three-year development plan, which was approved July 1, 1985. By the end of

1985, after two years of operation, BAPRC had found permanent homes for twenty-two African-American children⁵.

The agency continued their fundraising activities and marketing of their services through informational booths at local festivals. Everything changed in June of 1986. A child that had been placed by BAPRC died on June 13, 1986. The couple had adopted the child from BAPRC and had physically abused him before his death. The State of California conducted a thorough investigation and audit of all of the agency's cases. BAPRC's license was temporarily suspended due to the agency's failure to get a criminal record clearance on one of the parents who adopted the child.

During this troubling time, BAPRC received an enormous amount of support from the community. Those who called the agency were encouraged to send letters to the State and to the media in support of re-instating the agency's license. Community members established a community support group comprised of adoptive parents, friends and professionals who strategized on how to sustain the agency's good reputation. Because the incident led BAPRC's funders to withhold funding until the State's investigation was completed, the agency was forced to close temporarily. BAPRC received considerable media coverage and reporters were requesting the names of Board members, leading the Board to develop a task force and selecting one person to speak to the press.

In late 1986, Alice Washington resigned as Executive Director and the social worker who made the placement also resigned from BAPRC. The agency initiated a settlement process with the State of California, which was carefully followed by the local media. Although BAPRC had taken an enormous hit on all fronts, the Board continued to operate and slowly began to put

⁵ Beggs, M. (1992). *Preserving the Cultural Legacy: Black Adoption Placement and Research Center*. San Francisco, CA: Zellerbach Family Fund.

pieces into place to help them weather the storm. The Board began to recruit new members, particularly people who were working in child welfare to help increase their credibility.

Pat Reynolds recalls that she was working for the Children's Home Society and was recruited onto the BAPRC Board during this time. After only sitting on the Board for a few months, she accepted the position of Executive Director. Pat recalls that she had worked closely with BAPRC in her previous position at the Children's Home Society. She had mixed feelings about the agency at the time and about the incident but once she read the actual case, Pat felt that she had the knowledge and experience to put new systems into place to help the agency recover and prevent future incidents.

Pat hired two social workers who were former colleagues. They set about putting policies and procedures in place, searched for funding, and built collaborative relationships with county social service agencies because they were their link with foster children. Pat vividly recalls that when she returned to the office in the church, everything had been left in its place and the phone had been left on. People were calling and "black families that were waiting all of this time –for us to open because they did not want to go to the county and wanted Black Adoptions." Pat reflects that those phone calls fueled her passion to re-build the agency and provide a place for families who wanted to adopt but did not want to go to the county. In 1987 BAPRC reapplied for their state license and were granted a probationary license that would allow them to operate within a fifty-mile radius.

In early 1989 Pat Reynolds announced that she would be leaving BAPRC to work for the Stuart Foundation. She helped the Board recruit and hire Glendora Patterson as her replacement. When Pat left, so did the two employees who she had hired; therefore, BAPRC experienced 100% turnover in the summer of 1989. BAPRC held a community potluck in July for staff

farewells, welcoming of the new Executive Director, and assuring families that the turnover would not affect the continuity of service. By October the agency was fully staffed again and their second Open House was held. During this time of transition, BAPRC maintained 23 children in supervision, completed 9 home studies, enrolled 7 families in training, and received 43 inquiries.

Glendora was excited to be a part of an organization that other African-American social workers had envisioned and launched. Her top three priorities for the agency were: 1) permanency planning (either with a child's biological family or adoptive one), 2) developing an ethnocentric strategy for recruiting families, and 3) developing an appropriate system of assessment for use with interested families. Glendora also had plans for staff development and building a stronger Board of Directors. With rebuilding and restructuring in mind, Glendora was also aware that the community and professionals associated with BAPRC needed to go through a 'healing process' from the bad press that the agency had received after the 1986 tragedy. Glendora, her staff, and Board members began doing outreach to community organizations and churches to inform people that BAPRC had reopened with a new team of workers who maintained the same dedication to the agency's mission as its founders.

In September 1989 BAPRC launched the Bulletin Board, a newsletter that was originally published as a resource for BAPRC parents. The Bulletin Board provided a calendar of the month's activities and other information that staff thought would be of particular interest to families. In its early months, there were 35-50 copies mailed to families per month. Over time, as interest increased, BAPRC began mailing over 500 copies of the newsletter to a wide range of constituents. In early 1993, it came to the Board's attention that some of the materials presented in the Bulletin Board newsletter were not appropriate for a diverse audience. The original intent

of providing an avenue for simple, intimate communication among families had gotten lost in the enthusiasm of sharing information with friends and supporters of BAPRC. In January 1993 the agency scaled down the newsletter and returned to publishing a monthly calendar of activities, wish lists, birthday celebrations, parenting tips, finalization announcements, Resource Room additions, news, and support group meeting schedules.

In 1989/1990 BAPRC continued to experience difficulties in getting referrals from local counties. Glendora and other staff reached out to county social service offices to educate them about the agency and encourage their workers to refer children to BAPRC. They also helped public child welfare workers to appreciate the strengths of BAPRC families (many of whom were single parent households) and to support the state-approved adoption rate that BAPRC required. Glendora and the Board also held several successful fundraisers and began to develop their next strategic plan which was adopted on November 1991.

The strategic planning process engaged both staff and the Board in a unique opportunity to work together and plan for BAPRC's future. The first planning session involved a self-assessment of the agency, a review of the mission and values, and decision making about organizational goals involving administration, programs, finances and community relations. BAPRC staff and Board members were asked to come up with a collective answer to the following three questions: 1) Where do we want to be five years from now?, 2) What will it cost to get there?, and 3) How do we get the resources to get there? This process resulted in a five-year strategic plan (1991-1996) that addressed the following four themes: 1) Organization Development (establish systems that will ensure effective planning, policy formation, organization management and evaluation occur). 2) Finance (develop long-term, reliable, diverse, independent sources of financial support from individual donations, a capital campaign,

foundation and corporate funding, federal and state funding, joint ventures with other African-American nonprofits, campaigns, an endowment and bequests), 3) Programs and Services (locate and provide permanent homes), and 4) Community Outreach and Community Impacts (communicate locally and nationally about the organization, its goals and the services that BAPRC provides).

In May of 1991 Glendora proposed that the agency institute a no-fee policy that would cancel the \$1000 fee-for-service policy that was instituted under Alice Washington. Glendora's rationale was that, with the fee schedule in place, BAPRC was attracting middle and upper income families rather than the full range of income levels. Glendora also noted that BAPRC was the only African-American agency charging fees and that African-American professionals were advocating for the removal of fee-based placements. Her final argument was that the agency's income from adoptions fees was minimal. The Board approved the decision and the Finance and Fundraising Committees worked to attract new donors and raise money to offset the projected loss of fee revenue.

During the early 1990s Glendora and the Board focused heavily on continuing to raise awareness of the agency in the community and diversify their funding base. One fundraising event instituted by the Board was called *Pieces of a Dream*. Board members sold calendars that represented children in future occupations (e.g., children dressed as firemen and school teachers). The fundraising activity brought in over \$7000 and raised the community awareness of BAPRC. The organization also used bus-stop bench advertisements, with its first being strategically located next to the Children's Hospital in Oakland where parents, volunteers and other community members pass by daily.

The 1991 Auction was the most successful one that the agency had hosted and brought in \$5,500. The agency also increased its visibility and income by providing fee-based workshops, partnering with the San Francisco Department of Social Services and the Children's Services Center of Monterey, and seeking reimbursements for special-needs adoptions from the State. Furthermore, they raised board member annual contributions, planned new fundraising events (e.g., golf tournament and a major gala), encouraged community organizations to make donations throughout the year and sold promotional items like t-shirts.

Although many of the founding board members remained on the Board after BAPRC reopened, new members were recruited as older members resigned. Glendora sought to build a Board of high-profile people in the African-American community who were well-respected and had community connections with local churches, organizations, or other public entities. Prospective members had to be knowledgeable about BAPRC and believe in the mission of the agency. Glendora describes the Board of Directors as a "group of Black people who were dedicated and committed to Black children and families."

The Board of Directors had several subcommittees that would meet outside of the monthly board meetings and would provide progress reports and updates on specific tasks at the regular meetings. In the early 1990s the Board Development Committee initiated discussions about changing the name and logo of the agency. New names such as Black Adoption Center, Black Family Adoption Center and Black Families Reuniting Through Adoption and Foster Care were suggested. Although this proposal was not realized at the time, the committee continued to discuss new names and an updated logo. The Board Finance Committee reported to the Board the financial status of the agency every month and would remind members when an audit was in process. This committee also makes sure that each board member had a copy of the agency's

financial reports. The Child Welfare Committee discussed fee increases to offset the costs of providing services to both foster care and adoptive families.

The re-opening of the agency, transition to new leadership, and implementation of new policies and procedures created tension in the Board during the early 90s. Some board members became frustrated with lack of interest or commitment exhibited by other board members. Glendora and the Board President tried to enforce the agency's by-laws, particularly those involving board meeting attendance and other minimum expectations. In May 1993 the Board brought in a consultant, a clinical psychologist, to facilitate discussion among BAPRC board members about the extent to which recent conflicts and tensions among the members produced less engagement and commitment by the members.

Although the majority of the board members welcomed the opportunity to openly address their processes, a few members were not supportive of the consultation process. The consultation saw three primary issues that interfered with the Board's productivity: 1) level of Board engagement and commitment, 2) Board leadership, and 3) a loose definition of the relationship between the Board and the Executive Director. The consultant suggested that the Board work together to re-establish the basis for effective relationships among the members. He noted that increased trust and commitment among the board members would need to occur in order for each board member to feel a sense of purpose and give the group a larger sense of competence and coherence.

When BAPRC reopened, they filled only a few staff positions (e.g., the Executive Director, Social Work Supervisor, Office Manager, and three social workers). It was challenging for BAPRC to recruit and retain staff in a small, specialized nonprofit organization. There was one particular moment in which Glendora received a resignation letter on the same day that

another social worker went out on sick leave. This reduced the staff by 50% and Glendora struggled to cover two caseloads of anxious and disappointed children and families. Not only did the remaining social workers experience caseload increase, but the agency had to hire social workers under contract until they were able to hire staff for full-time positions.

During this time, Glendora and the Board recognized the need for someone to be the voice of BAPRC in the community and the media. The agency hired a part-time recruiter to arrange for agency speaking engagements and radio public service announcements. Within two months of hiring the recruiter, BAPRC received forty-nine telephone inquiries (double the number of telephone calls received in the previous two months). A past board member, Kathy Massey, recalls hearing the radio advertisements on one of her favorite Sunday morning gospel show and her and her husband became adoptive parents through BAPRC in 1994 and Kathy joined the Board in 1995. Sylvia Joyner, the Associate Director, recalls that the advertisements also led her to BAPRC, where she became an adoptive parent, a volunteer and ultimately an employee.

As the staff grew and the agency went through more changes, the Board reviewed their budget and approved fringe benefits totaling \$55,000. With this approval, the agency was able to offer benefits to full-time staff members that included health insurance through Kaiser Permanente, full-coverage dental insurance, and life insurance. Additionally, staff would no longer have to pay for parking at the agency. Funds were designated for staff development, staff retreats, retirement planning, and reimbursement for vision, child and eldercare services. Although the salaries were modest in comparison to other nonprofits, these changes recognized the staff and their passion for the BAPRC mission.

In 1992 BAPRC realized that it had outgrown its space at 506 15th Street in Oakland. Glendora and the Board sought a larger and accessible location for the agency. For months the Board discussed whether to purchase or lease a space or to re-negotiate a new lease at the current location. The Board established a goal to purchase a property that provided 2500-3000 square feet and began exploring ways to meet this goal. The Board and staff members developed a list called *What it Would Take to Keep Us Happy at 506 15th Street?* The list included a nearby training location, computers, printers, new telephone lines and telephones, a multi-function copier, upgraded furniture, improved maintenance, new blinds and carpets. The James Irvine Foundation expressed an interest in offering a challenge grant to facilitate the options presented by the Board. BAPRC applied for a grant of \$98,000, half to be used for planning and related systems upgrades and half to be used to challenge prospective donors to purchase a property to house the agency. The James Irvine Foundation awarded BAPRC \$48,000 to support the development and implementation of a resource and marketing plan. In March 1993, BAPRC leased a space (with an option to buy) and moved to 1801 Harrison Street in Oakland.

In the early 1990s, BAPRC also offered a variety of workshops and materials to prepare adults for their roles as foster/adoptive parents. One of the first conferences BAPRC hosted in the early 1990s was titled *Parenting Black Children in the 1990s*. The conference opened with children joining their parents in two of the workshops on reading and games. During the next part of the agency, childcare workers engaged the children in reading, playing games, eating snacks, music and drawing while the parents attended workshops on drug-exposed children, nutrition, children's behavior, and children's learning experiences. Parents who attended the conference evaluated the workshops as "excellent" and noted that each session was skillfully presented by a professional in a way that allowed for considerable participation. Other

workshops that BAPRC sponsored during this time dealt with issues of attachment and separation.

In 1990 Gloria King was hired as a clinical consultant but within three months was promoted to Clinical Director to address multiple program issues related to the process of qualifying African-American families for adopting African-American children who were waiting for adoption. The county child welfare agencies were not satisfied with the skills and capacities of the adoptive parents, as reflected in the BAPRC home-studies. In addition, the county preferred to place children in two-parent households that were financially stable and located in preferred neighborhoods. Although these standards may have been sufficient for the average American family waiting to adopt, they were too narrowly defined for the pool of African-American families. Furthermore, the county child welfare workers who were making these assessments and decisions were often not culturally-competent and did not know how to properly interview or relate to these family units. These workers did not understand the concept of “kinship support” in the African-American culture where an extended family includes both relatives and non-relatives or friends living together under one roof.

Gloria’s job was to help the staff at BAPRC acquire more clinical interviewing skills in order to more adequately document the strengths of African-American families. This was a direct result of county child welfare offices rejecting home studies and requiring BAPRC staff to send their home studies to multiple counties. Gloria recalls that when she was hired in 1990, there was considerable staff tension between the mental health staff and the social workers. Her job was to bring these two groups together with a shared goal of connecting families.

Gloria served as BAPRC’s clinical director from 1990 to 1994. When she arrived, there were seven or eight staff members and their morale was low. Gloria recalls that working with an

older staff required her to be creative in terms of providing staff support and positive reinforcement. She applauded their knowledge and wisdom and used their experience to promote changes by spending more time observing and seeking advice during her early years with the agency. She recognized that, although she had book knowledge and knew some clinical techniques, the staff were authentic and experienced in their work with families. Her trust in them came, in part, from the fact that they were mothers and some had adopted themselves. As staff members began moving towards retirement, Gloria talked with them and worked closely with them so that when they were ready to transition, they left the agency as continuing supporters of BAPRC.

A challenge that the management team faced was providing facilitative supervision to help staff report on what they did in the field, what worked or what did not work, what challenged them and what made a difference in working with their families. Gloria recalls that as a new, young clinical director, she struggled with supervising African-American professionals who were 15 -20 years her senior in an all female staff. She reflects that it was particularly challenging because, as an African-American woman, all of her clinical training and experience had taken place in work environments where she had been the only woman of color. Gloria greatly values this learning experience because the staff brought with them a sense of commitment to their work and pride for working in an African-American led agency that she has always cherished. Both Gloria and Glendora had high standards for quality work and required that the staff live the agency mission, work long hours if needed, and carefully document all cases because of the profound impact that the agency would have on the future of children.

In order to expand the interviewing skills of the staff, the Clinical Director brought into the agency several instruments related to building rapport with families in order to help the

families open up and talk about their background while also helping staff maintain professional boundaries. Staff were involved in role-playing different situations and Gloria went with them into the field to model clinical practice skills. Given the tragedy in the late 1980s, the agency emphasized both careful assessment and complete case documentation that were critical to maintaining BAPRC's state license.

Given that BAPRC had faith-based origins, Glendora helped the agency incorporate the practice of different rituals that were seen as important, particularly related to recruiting families and preparing them for adoption. BAPRC developed rituals that focused on pride in the African-American heritage based on a high regard of who they were as people and how they transferred this respect to children who were waiting for adoption. BAPRC held its first annual Kwanzaa celebration in December 1989 and continues to host this annual family celebration. The agency uses Kwanzaa as an opportunity to educate families about African-American heritage and instill pride and self-esteem in parents and children. BAPRC also acknowledges February as Black History Month and marks this as a time of reflection on the heritage and triumphs of the African-American people.

During the early 1990s, BAPRC management worked hard to build a community education program to help African-American families understand the benefits of adopting children. Gloria noted that African-Americans felt uneasy about separating a birth mother from her child (a feeling that goes back to the time of slavery when children were taken from their families and sold to plantation owners). So while the African-American community recognized the issues facing children in foster care, they were conflicted about becoming the family that would be contributing to the removal of a child from his/her birth parent. As a result, the agency made extra efforts to help adoptive families stay connected to birth families. This was a huge

innovation in the adoption world at the time, although now it is a common practice. BAPRC pioneered a new form of culturally competent adoption practice and family preservation services by working to help stabilize families and keep them together. In 1992 Sylvia Joyner, an adoptive parent, was hired by BAPRC as the trainer. She was certified in facilitating the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) training developed by the Child Welfare League of America and shared her adoptive experiences and knowledge with new potential placements.

In 1992 BAPRC was awarded a two-year federally funded project called Project SNAP (Special Needs Adoptions Program). This program was a partnership with the Alameda County Department of Social Services. Project SNAP focused on male African-American children (ages 0-5 years) who were waiting for placement and were often considered the most difficult to place. Although Project SNAP ended in December 1994, BAPRC and Alameda County continued to collaborate in finding homes for these children. In 1993, BAPRC and another local adoption agency, Family Support Services of the Bay Area, joined together to expand supportive services for adoptive families living in Alameda, Contra Costa, and Solano counties. The new venture was called the Parent Support Project and offered parents the opportunity to join support groups with people who shared similar experiences of foster care/adoption. While BAPRC facilitated the support groups, Family Support Services provided the respite care.

Giving back to the African-American community meant transforming the staff's efforts to provide family support groups into peer groups. In 1993 BAPRC was awarded a federal grant to develop a program called Project-In-Touch, a two-year \$200,000 federal grant that funded post-legal support services in collaboration with Alameda County. Project-in-Touch recruited families that had adopted to serve as mentors to new adoptive families. Sylvia Joyner accepted the position of Project Manager of Project-in-Touch in summer 1994. Under this program,

BAPRC provided several hours of training so that the parents could be leaders of their own peer-level support group. Mentor families would guide new parents and help them with their challenges. BAPRC staff served as liaisons and provided materials and resources to the families as well as assisting in finding consultants to speak on various topics that the parents wanted to learn about. It was the role of staff to empower the families to be their own support.

New Leadership (1994-2000)

In June 1994 Glendora retired as the Executive Director of BAPRC. Based on her leadership, the staff, Board, parents, and community supporters, had helped BAPRC become an agency that held true to its mission of serving children and the community with integrity, appreciation and skill. BAPRC underwent a year of transition between 1994 and 1995 with the search and hiring of a new Executive Director to lead the agency and reorganize its management team.

When Glendora announced her retirement from BAPRC, the Board initiated a national search to fill her position. Gloria King, the Clinical Director, applied for and was ultimately offered the Executive Director position in July 1994. Although Gloria had never held an Executive Director position, she had worked for the agency for four years, knew the internal and external community, had talent and skills, and was passionate about the work. She immersed herself in staff development, providing supervision, and expanding services to the fourteen Northern California counties that BAPRC was serving. As Gloria began hiring younger staff members, they were open to commuting in their cars to such outlying communities as Sacramento and Napa to conduct visits. Gloria also made a concerted effort to diversify the staff to reflect and compliment the families and children served by the agency.

Gloria continued the cultural work that Glendora had started through developing new programs that incorporated African-American heritage to help children explore their identities and build self-esteem. In 1995 BAPRC hosted its first annual camp, called Camp Nguzo Saba. The camp provided a safe place for adopted children and their families to talk about identity, belonging and self-esteem issues from a faith-based perspective. At the camp, parents and children celebrated together the richness of the African and African-American traditions, cultures and histories based on the principles of Kwanza.

Under Gloria's leadership, BAPRC also engaged in a collaborative with Adopt a Special Kid (specializing in special needs adoptions) and Family Builders of Adoption (specializing in Hispanic adoption) to develop an annual ceremony called "It Takes a Community: Calling Out of the Names of Children Who Wait." Gloria reflects that this was a groundbreaking project that received significant local and national attention. The California Government charged adoption agencies around the state to raise public awareness of adoption during National Adoption Month. BAPRC and the two other agencies involved represented adoptions in the Bay Area.

The three agencies worked together to develop a public awareness event that brought constituents together to raise the profile of children in need of permanent homes. The event is based in the African-American tradition of "calling out" or "lifting up". The State of California provided the names of children who had not yet found permanent homes. On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, from 10am-6pm, on the hour, every hour, names were called out by community members, parents, staff, and anyone else who wished to participate. The event was held in Jack London Square for ten years and was attended by religious and civic leaders, choirs, families, community members, public representatives and others who came regularly to observe National Adoption Awareness. Another component of this event that raised community awareness was

the advertisements for the event that were funded by the City of San Francisco and the Port of Oakland. Large photographs of children were strategically displayed around town and contributed to an increase in adoptions. Gloria particularly recalls an eleven-year old girl who was adopted by a Port of Oakland employee who walked by her picture everyday and contacted BAPRC.

The agency's budget in 1994 was \$1,706,393. BAPRC had secured several multi-year federal grants, including Project-in-Touch and Project SNAP. Once Gloria became the Executive Director, she began to work on a third project funded by the county of San Francisco and the Stuart Foundation that focused on very young children in foster care who did not have a plan for adoption and were returning to their biological families. A collaboration was built between four adoption agencies: 1) BAPRC in Oakland, CA, 2) Kinship Center in Monterey, CA, 3) Sierra Adoption in Sacramento, CA, and 4) Future Families in San Jose, CA. With financial and program support from the Stuart Foundation and the San Francisco County Department of Human Services, the collaborative called itself Partners-in-Placement. The four nonprofits were located in different areas and could therefore provide a much larger pool of families to recruit for the 80-plus children who were waiting for placement in San Francisco County.

Since most of the children involved in the Partners-in-Placement program were African-American, BAPRC was in a unique position as an agency focused on the African-American experience. This was not only because of race but because they had expertise in recruiting African-American families for African-American children. While this was happening on the local scene, new state legislation (AB548) on same-race placements was passed (encouraging same-race placements and increasing African-American placements through providing education and information to the African-American community) and subsequently challenged to allow non-

Black families to adopt African-American children. The challenge resulted from growing numbers of children of color entering the public child welfare system and languishing. This was in the context of the phenomena of drugs and violence, which were challenging the traditional model of African-American helping (e.g., setting an extra plate at the table) and thus separating children from their families. This was happening alongside issues around eligibility of African-American families. More children were remaining in the system and African-American families were not being certified as placements.

The passage of the federal Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 prohibited the delay of any adoption or foster care placement due to race, color or national origin of the child or of the foster or adoptive family. While AB548 would not allow for trans-racial adoption, MEPA came along to disallow discriminating practices in adoption and allow for mixed-race adoption. The national attention given to and interest in adoptions and raised the profile of BAPRC and other agencies providing foster and adoption services especially since over half a million children were in the national foster care system and California was the leading state in out-of-home placements. Gloria reflects that MEPA helped bring BAPRC to the table since they had never used discriminatory practices. This provided BAPRC an opportunity to demonstrate to policy makers and public child welfare agencies how non-discriminatory good child welfare practice could be achieved during the era of MEPA.

In 1996 the federal Inter-Ethnic Placement Act was passed to confirm and enforce the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act. This happened just as BAPRC was in the middle of the Partners-in-Placement Project (PIP) and trying to place 80 mostly African-American children in adoptive homes. Both MEPA and the Inter-Ethnic Placement Act helped the PIP project qualify the foster

parents in the program and formalize these 80 families. This allowed for the children to remain in their foster homes and for the families to be qualified, moving towards permanency.

Gloria recalls that the four agencies came together as partners but had no prior collaborative experience together. BAPRC focused on trying to find ways to maximize the expertise of each agency in order to achieve better placement outcomes. The collaborative struggled to develop its mission and vision. They had to explore each agency's values, core issues, cultures and the different approaches that they took in their work. The collaboration was ultimately very challenging on multiple levels. The agency directors who sat at the table often held old mindsets and, even though they were part of the leadership group, it was the staff members at the respective agencies who were doing the direct work. Therefore, each Director had to go back to their agencies, re-educate their staff, and generate staff buy-in. To ensure service quality, quarterly reports from each agency had to identify the number of placements made, how many people attended informational meetings, and the retention levels of the adoptive homes. BAPRC's outcomes were excellent and after three-years of collaboration, the agency began looking at other ways to achieve more effective outcomes.

When the Partnership came up for bid, BAPRC informed the other partners that the agency was applying to be the lead fiscal agent and therefore did not feel that it was right for Gloria to attend the Partnership's planning sessions for proposal writing due to competition. BAPRC was awarded the contract in 1996 and became the lead fiscal agent of a two-agency collaborative (with Family Builders by Adoption) that was called the San Francisco Child Project (SF Child). The collaborative was streamlined to focus on the more specialized services delivered by the agencies. BAPRC had experience and expertise serving African-American

families and Family Builders had a special outreach program for the Hispanic community; therefore, this new partnership expanded the program to include Latino children.

Around the same time, BAPRC applied for and received state funding to open a satellite office in Vallejo to better serve Northern California county child welfare agencies. These funds also provided matching funds for the SF Child Project related to targeted recruitment of African-American and Latino adoptive homes. As Associate Director, Sylvia Joyner was the coordinator for the satellite office. This site provided a resource library and recruited and trained foster and adoptive parents but did not provide any placement services. Funding for this office ended after two years and Sylvia returned to coordinate the SF Child Project.

By the late 1990s BAPRC had 17-18 staff members and had secured additional funding for a new Family Outreach Service Team in Alameda County. The county actually approached BAPRC for this project because of their demonstrated success with targeted recruitment in San Francisco. As BAPRC grew, its management responsibilities increased and changed as new collaborations and partnerships were added. To better lead the organization, Gloria enrolled in a nonprofit management certificate program at California State University as a way to compliment her clinical background and strengthen her management skills.

As the Executive Director, Gloria worked hard to connect BAPRC with county agencies and other nonprofit organizations to build relationships and discover how improve child welfare services. Gloria joined organizations such as the California Association of Adoptions Agencies and the Bay Area Association of Adoption Workers. These relationships provided a platform for BAPRC to involve themselves in discussions about the African-American children in the child welfare system, raise the profiles of families who were waiting to become adoptive parents, and influence larger system thinking about how to evaluate the strengths and needs of African-

American children in the system. BAPRC brought experience, skills-sets and techniques for working with families that public and private adoption agencies may not have worked with before. These relationships helped to re-shape child welfare practice related to children of color and also led to increased requests for BAPRC home studies.

BAPRC provided a voice for children who had not been heard at the local, state and national levels and education to colleagues on how to interview African-American families to show their strengths and how to care for children of color. In the wake of the press on the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, BAPRC's forward thinking anti-discrimination policies brought the agency to the forefront of trans-racial adoption in the Bay Area. Gloria was invited to make numerous presentations about BAPRC's trans-racial adoption practices. The passing of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 helped to expedite the adoption process by shortening the time-frames for making permanency planning decisions. This Act introduced concurrent planning to adoptions agencies, in which reunification and adoption plans could occur simultaneously and begin as soon as the child enters care.

In 1997 the Executive Director and the Board developed and approved a five-year strategic plan for 1998-2003. The process began with the same consultant that the Board had used several years earlier to develop the 1991-1996 plan. The goals involved continuing to increase the census of children served, marketing the agency locally and nationally and developing a research-based component of BAPRC. The Strategic Plan had four sections as noted in figure 2.

Figure 2: 1998-2003 Strategic Plan

- 1) **Organizational Development:** To develop the capacity of the agency to implement its mission into the 21st Century. Performance objectives addressed board development, staffing, facilities, technology, policy revision and evaluation.
- 2) **Finance:** To raise adequate revenues to sustain the organization over a five year period and beyond. Performance objectives addressed resource development, planned giving and generating independent income.
- 3) **Programs and Services:** To develop programs and provide services to meet the changing needs of the community. Performance objectives addressed establishing BAPRC as an MSW practicum site, developing a faculty resource center, family recruitment, agency research, the Bridge to Permanency Program, hosting a national conference, and involvement in public policy.
- 4) **Community Relations:** To educate and involve all segments of the community in the resolution of the problem of waiting African-American children who are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. Performance objectives addressed the development of a multi-faceted marketing plan.

With respect to developing media relations, recruiting families and marketing the organization, BAPRC developed a half-hour cable television show that was funded, in part, by the SF Child Project. The show was called Adoptions Today and involved collaboration with Alternative Resource Center, who developed and produced the 30-minute television show. The first show aired on Cable channel 26 in San Francisco and Oakland in April 1998 and included interviews of families who had gone through BAPRC and a segment (called Kids' Corner) that introduced children who were waiting for adoption. The show proved to be a very successful

recruitment strategy and numerous children were placed based on viewers seeing them on television.

In 1998 BAPRC introduced its new logo and mission statement. The goal of the new logo was to accurately reflect the role that the agency played in the community. Gloria and the Board believed that the new image evoked a sense of creativity in their approach to finding permanent homes for children as well as provided many possibilities for marketing the agency's services. The mission statement was revised to make it more concise and reflective of their work (*Our mission is to recruit, train and certify families for the placement of African-American and all children waiting for permanent homes*).

Between 1998 and 1999 there was significant turnover in the Board of Directors as the terms of four Board members ended in 1999. BAPRC's founding Board had played a prominent role in the launching of the agency and then restructuring the agency to prepare for its re-opening. A reduced Board was a natural process as the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors changed. When Gloria became Executive Director in 1994, she helped the Board move from a hands-on Board to a policy and fundraising Board. She recruited a board consultant to help the Board devise a plan to move forward and change their governance process.

In March 1999 BAPRC relocated from 1801 Harrison Street in downtown Oakland to 125 Second Street in the Jack London Square area. The new two-level office space was more than twice the square footage of the previous location and accommodated the agencies growth and expansion. The new location provided an opportunity for BAPRC to develop a resource library, offer more training in a spacious training room and provide a dedicated area for children.

In addition to a change in location, BAPRC underwent a change in its management structure when Sylvia Joyner was promoted to the new Associate Director position. This

position supervises recruitment staff, coordinates special events, develops funds (e.g., writes grants with the Executive Director), and is responsible for publishing, facilitating trainings and provides some support for the Social Work staff. BAPRC ended the 1990s with a staff of twenty full-time employees and an annual budget of \$1,505,087

New Challenges (2000-Present)

BAPRC entered the 21st Century as a thriving nonprofit organization. The staff was as large as it had ever been, successful placements continued to increase in numbers, the agency was expanding its presence in the community and was beginning to receive more national attention. In 2000 BAPRC staff and families were invited by the Port of Oakland to participate in the annual yacht parade and they also hosted a annual holiday reception with a toy give-away.

The collaborative relationships continued to be fruitful as agency leaders focused on networking and providing education and training to other nonprofits serving African-American youth in the foster care system. The Executive Director began to receive invitations to make local presentations and speak at national and statewide conferences. For example, the Child Welfare Institute invited Gloria to present a series of workshops instructing Southern California child welfare workers on BAPRC's empowerment model (helping families who did not look like their children) at a conference in Riverside. Her presentation was titled *An Empowerment Model of Trans-racial Adoption*. She also presented at the 31st annual National Association of Black Social Workers conference about public-private partnerships and BAPRC's multi-level recruitment model. Gloria was working hard to help BAPRC build greater organizational capacity by attending workshops such as Going Beyond Government Funding and the Women's Business Conference.

During 2000 the agency had funding from two grants, fees for service and fundraising. The Executive Director and the Board had also made the decision to re-instate the agency's administrative fees for adoption. The agency's first annual phon-a-athon in December 1999 yielded \$22,000 in pledges and the Board's calendar sales (among other fundraising activities) helped to raise their profile while generating income. In 2000 BAPRC also acquired another local organization called Our Family and Friends that placed children in foster homes based on the individual needs of the child. The agency had to close down in 2000 and selected BAPRC as the organization who would receive their families, which resulted in an increase of families served and income generated. In 2001, BAPRC further expanded its foster care services when it collaborated with the faith-based community in developing a new program called Life Advocates for Children. This program brought BAPRC's recruitment information and preparatory training into local churches.

In 2001 BAPRC employed nineteen staff that included the Executive Director, Associate Director, Resident Psychotherapist, six MSW level Social Work Specialists, a Social Work Assistant, and other administrative and support staff who served four-hundred families. Gloria continued to help the Board move towards becoming a fundraising entity. Dr. Evelyn Wesley, current Board Vice President, who joined the Board in 2001, recalls that she had been aware of BAPRC's presence in the community and was impressed with the history of the agency's work in meeting the needs of the African-American community. Dr. Wesley reflects that the Board was small and it was challenged by raising funds as well as recruiting and retaining well-connected, knowledgeable and passionate members.

In 2002, the Board focused its attention on the BAPRC's 20th anniversary celebration. The agency's staff had declined to seventeen full-time employees and they had a core group of

volunteers who assisted with family recruitment. During this year BAPRC's financial support came primarily from fees for service, special contracts, foundation grants, individual donations, fundraising events and gifts from local community organizations and corporations. In 2002, the agency's \$1,000,000 contract with the San Francisco Department of Human Services to fund the SF Child Project was renewed for three more years and they contracted with Alameda County for a targeted recruitment program called the Family Outreach Service Team (FOST Project). The organization also developed their post-placement services by providing over thirty-five activities for families and children, including two teen workshops, a two-day culture camp and a parent training.

Local and national recognition for BAPRC also emerged in 2002. Gloria received the Eureka Fellow Award and Mentoring opportunity award from Eureka Communities, a national organization that emphasizes the development of Executive Directors who lead nonprofits addressing the needs of underprivileged families. Under this award the Executive Director of Evergreen Children's Services in Detroit, Michigan, selected BAPRC for mentorship and spent a week at the agency being mentored by Gloria. Additionally, in 2002, BAPRC sponsored its first parent conference, hosted a parent forum to identify the needs of families after placement and expanded Adoption Today on television Channel 44.

In 2003 national interest in BAPRC continued to grow and Gloria was invited to speak at a number of conferences. These speaking engagements provided good publicity for the agency as Gloria was interviewed and quoted in a Washington Post article, interviewed by the Chicago Tribune and NASW asked Gloria to submit an article for their May 2003 newsletter. Furthermore, she was asked to participate in a national forum on youth permanency hosted by the Stuart Foundation and attended the 2003 Rainbow Push Silicon Valley Project's Digital

Connections conference that focused on gathering communities and people of color to help address the digital divide.

Despite the positive visibility that BAPRC was receiving, the agency began experiencing financial difficulties. Gloria sent a memo to the Board and staff with a plan to reduce the agency's expenses. She used a statement issued by the Child Welfare League of America indicating that the United States is facing a budget shortfall for programs serving children and families. Gloria's memo reflected that the nation's economic downturn was affecting BAPRC because: 1) external funding from foundations and corporations was declining, 2) prospective families were not stepping forward to adoption, and 3) public agencies were cutting staff that ultimately slowed the process of placements. BAPRC's response was to make several changes on July 1, 2003 (eliminating one staff position and reducing two staff to part-time, raising the application fees for prospective adoptive families, reducing newsletter costs, eliminating the reception portion of the Board meetings, and fewer agency events). All of these changes were in response to a projected loss of \$158,925.

BAPRC's 20th anniversary celebration was held in the fall of 2003. At this time the agency employed a staff of fourteen and worked with 450 families. The budget had fallen from \$2,222,659 in 2002 to \$1,239,694. Toni Sander was a social worker with BAPRC during this time and recalls the budget cuts and staffing reductions. She went on maternity leave and returned to the organization as a consultant, working on an as-need basis. Despite the layoffs, BAPRC was able to maintain a high level of service with the primary focus on the children.

In 2004 Gloria and the Board initiated a series of planning meetings to develop a new strategic plan that was reflective of the changing external environment. The biggest challenge involved raising enough funds to maintain the agencies level of operations. The agency applied

for quite a few grants in the Fall of 2004 and began the search for new offices because the building in which they were renting offices was sold. The Board President helped negotiate a lease and the agency moved to 7801 Edgewood Drive in October 2004, where BAPRC still resides.

Also in 2004, Gloria was nominated and elected to be the Chair of Northern California Adoptions Agencies. During this same year BAPRC applied for and received a \$150,000 contract from First 5 of Alameda County. This contract funded services for children ages 0-5, and was based upon BAPRC's prior work with Project SNAP. In 2004, BAPRC renamed its foster care program to Bridge to Permanency. This reflected the agency's belief that children need a permanent home and that foster care is only a bridge to permanency. The staff of thirteen worked with over 500 families and the agency hosted multiple symposiums, workshops and activities focused on post-placement support. While BAPRC applied for many grants in 2004 and 2005, only a few were awarded. Gloria and the Board decided to not fill vacant positions, instituted a salary and hiring freeze, restructured the agency's workflow and continued applying for more funding.

In order to identify new ways to recruit adoptive families, the agency reconnected with the faith community by establishing and naming the Black Adoption Community Center program in 2005. This program sought to integrate the agency in the community by facilitating informational meetings in churches to educate and recruit adoptive families. Using advertising every Sunday morning in church bulletins, the Love Center Ministries was its first partner. Gloria hired a team to do recruitment and developed a format for approaching the faith community, usually starting with the pastor. The program targeted churches in different communities by assessing their size, community orientation, and level of political and social

involvement in the community. They were successful with five congregations in the program's first year of operation.

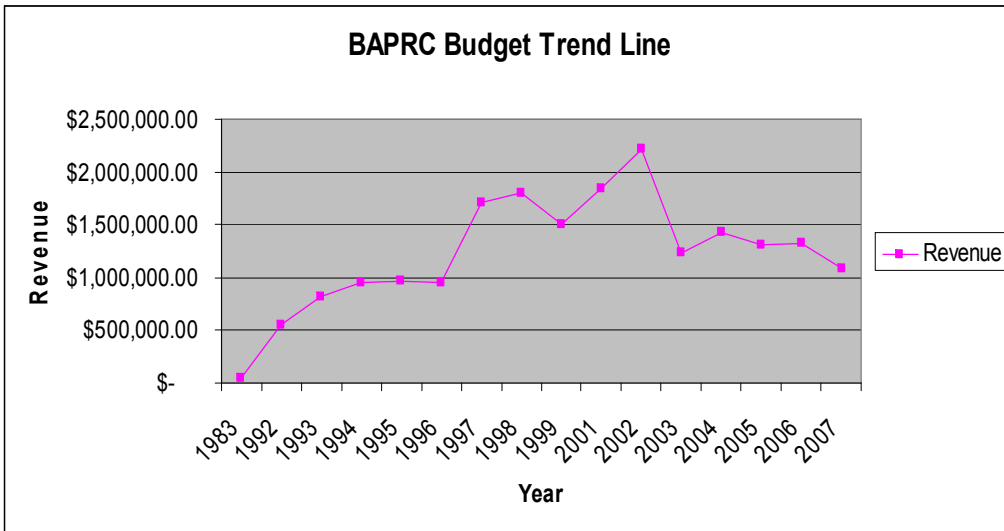
In 2006, funding issues continued to be a challenge. Although the SF Child project had been successfully received by BAPRC for ten years, the three-year grant was not renewed, reducing the agency's revenue stream by \$1,000,000 over three years. As a result, the Clinical Director and Program Assistant positions were eliminated as was one-half of the recruiter position. Outreach and promotional materials were printed in house (rather than contracting with a printer) and location sites for informational meetings were increased from four to seven with the hopes that additional sites would provide families easier access. Despite the financial, the Board committed itself to raising \$40,000 in 2007 by hosting multiple fundraisers and staff pursued two federal grants (each with the potential of a minimum of \$150,000 annually). Community donations in 2006 increased 150% and recruitment for classes were 50% higher than expected.

In 2008, BAPRC continues to struggle with financial challenges. The 2007 annual budget was \$1,088,444, which is similar to the agency's budget ten years ago (as reflected in Appendix A). The Executive Director and Associate Director continued to apply for federal, county and foundation funding; however, as the staff continues to get smaller, the staff power to write the grants and manage them is smaller as well. One current Board member notes that in order to increase individual donations significantly, an organization needs to assign an employee to market the agency, solicit funds and raise money. Unfortunately, because of funding constraints, BAPRC employees and the Board are entirely responsible for seeking and securing their funding base.

At this time, BAPRC employs four full-time employees and contracts with other staff on an as-needed basis. The agency continues to serve their families and the larger community with the high quality services that they are known for. In addition to financial challenges, current Board members interviewed admit that recruiting and retaining a committed and engaged Board is also challenging during difficult economic times.

Despite multiple challenges, BAPRC in 2008 continues to maintain its reputation for delivering culturally-responsive foster and adoptive services and education in Northern California. As they plan to celebrate their 25th Anniversary in the Fall of 2008 with a concert and fundraising event, both the staff and Board are optimistic about the agency's future. Everyone associated with BAPRC feels confident that 2009 will bring new and diversified funding opportunities. As the Executive Director, Gloria King notes, it has been in the lean and most challenging times that BAPRC promotes the creativity needed to lead to the most wonderful outcomes.

Appendix A: BAPRC Budget Trend Line



Persons Interviewed for the Completion of the History

Odell Johnson – Current Board Member and adoptive grandparent

Sylvia Joyner – Current Associate Director and adoptive parent

Gloria King, M.S. – Current Executive Director

Kathy Massey – Past Board Member and adoptive parent

Glendora Patterson, Ph.D. – Previous Executive Director

Pat Reynolds – Previous Executive Director

Lillian Roberts – Current Receptionist/Program Assistant

Toni Sander – Past employee and current contractor

Dr. Evelyn Wesley – Current Board Vice President