

Letters to the Editor

Rethink adoption policy

The letter published in the Globe by Linda K. Carlisle, commissioner of the Department of Social Services, ("Breaking the racial barriers for child adoption," Dec. 15) is a masterpiece of denial, avoidance and obfuscation. While admitting that the Massachusetts policy is to racially match children with families if possible, she claims that there are no policies that prohibit transracial adoption and that a reasonable degree of latitude regarding such adoption exists.

She avoids dealing with the undeniable fact is that DSS systematically holds children of color for months and years at a time in foster and other institutional care rather than placing them with waiting white families solely because it places such a high priority on same-race adoption. Transracial placement is allowed only as an occasional last resort for children whose placement has typically been held up for years in the vain hope of finding a same-race family.

A report published by DSS in 1992 on its adoption system ("Who are the Waiting Children?") revealed quite clearly that this was DSS policy and asked the question whether, in light of the overwhelming number of black children waiting for homes and the limited number of available black families, transracial adoption should be considered (Page 51). The answer to date has been no.

Carlisle indicates that her only agenda is to place more emphasis on same-race recruitment. Given the fact that blacks constitute more than 40 percent of the foster care population but less than 5 percent of the Massachusetts population, this program is not likely to work. The state needs a law like that enacted last spring in Texas that would prohibit the use of race to delay, deny or otherwise discriminate in adoptive placement.

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