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Micah and His Protectors*Lisette Lahana, LCSW*

Seven months before the start of college, Micah and his mother, Corinne, drove two hours to begin working with me. Early on, he made it clear he wanted me to use the name Micah—along with male pronouns—instead of his assigned name, Mia. Assigned female at birth, he was 17, tall, lanky, sweet-faced, with short, curly hair, soft facial features, a bright smile, and a high-pitched voice. He identified as multiracial—“half white and half black”—and as trans. Although intelligent, he was not particularly talkative. The clinical work was a challenge because of competing goals. Micah began socially transitioning two years earlier and just wanted to start hormones as well as get both of his parents, especially his stepdad, Nick, on board. Corinne, deeply connected to her child, was supportive, but was at the early stages of understanding what it meant to be transgender. Until that point, Nick had showed no real interest in furthering his knowledge about the transgender experience, so neither Corinne nor Micah knew what to expect from him. Beyond this insular unit was Micah’s biological dad, Greg, who had been mostly exempt from his parenting role, and his older sister, Jessica, who lived far away. Acceptance from both of them was still important to Micah. Given the distance from their home to my office, our work was a combination of in-person visits and video sessions.

Micah’s biological parents, Corinne and Greg, had been together a total of eight years. Corinne was of mixed European heritage and Greg was African American. Micah was born seven years after his sister, Jessica. Once Corinne and Greg divorced, Greg had some early visitation, but contact became very sporadic once Corinne married Nick, who was Asian American. Micah was two years old at the time. Greg, Nick, and Corinne had all served in the military, so Micah and Jessica had grown up moving from city to city, which limited Micah’s opportunity to develop long-term friendships. Corinne and Nick had relocated to Northern California four years earlier in order to be closer to Corinne’s beloved elderly parents. She had grown up in a Catholic home; however, as an adult, she had raised her children outside the church. Nick had little family to speak of but was embraced by Corinne’s parents. Corinne began to teach kindergarten after