

Brain Food



DAVID M WARREN / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Influences

What shapes the minds that make the news

Maxine Chalker

is executive director of Adoptions From the Heart, based in Wynnewood. An adoptee herself, she founded the nonprofit agency in 1985.

Quotation to live by: "Happiness is a decision, not a circumstance" — I'm not sure where I found this, but it struck a chord.

Books on my nightstand right now: *The Tenth Circle*, by Jodi Picoult; *Jesus Land*, by Julia Schéeres.

Favorite author, fiction: James Patterson, Jodi Picoult.

Favorite author, nonfiction: James McBride, Barack Obama.

Favorite poet: Maya Angelou.

Favorite beach reading: Mysteries or thrillers.

Book or author other people praise but I never liked: *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown.

A book that influenced how I live my life: *The Road Less Traveled*, by M. Scott Peck.

TV show I'm not ashamed to admit I watch: *Desperate Housewives* (ABC).

TV shows I hate to admit I like: *Survivor* (CBS) and *Wife Swap* (ABC).

Favorite comic strip: I never read them.

Movies I love so much I've watched them more than twice: *Cry Freedom* and *The Power of One*.



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Web sites I visit regularly: Joint Council on International Adoption (www.jcics.org), Google, and my bank.

If you turned my car radio on right now, it would be tuned to: KYW-AM (1060).

Magazines I read regularly: Philadelphia Magazine, Main Line Today, Adoptive Families.

Favorite type of music: Calypso, soca.

Last concert/performance attended: Lionel Richie

Recording I play when my soul needs a lift: "One Love," by Bob Marley.

Person in my field whom I most admire: Jane Aronson (the "Orphan Doctor") and Gloria Steinem.

Living person I'd most like to join for dinner and conversation: Oprah Winfrey.

Heroes from history: The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B.

Anthony, Mother Teresa, Audrey Hepburn.

Living heroes: Barbara Walters and Oprah Winfrey.

Favorite travel destination: Vietnam.

If I had the power to order all of the Philadelphia region to read one book, it would be: *The Color of Water*, by James McBride.

And here's why: This is an inspiring book that addresses racial identity with compassion and realism. It is the story of author James McBride's Caucasian Jewish mother who married an African American man and overcame extreme poverty and racism to raise 12 successful children. It also tells of McBride's struggle with race and where he fits in. This book is about overcoming barriers; with luck, it could stand as a reminder to people to be more accepting of families that don't look like their own, and as a source of hope for overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles and adversity.