

ANNOTATED SUMMARY OF RESOURCES | WHITENESS PANDEMIC

Information in this document was compiled in the Spring of 2021 by undergraduate research assistant Aniya Armour, B. A., and her mentor, Keira Leneman, M.A. within Dr. Ferguson's [Culture and Family Life Lab](#) in the Institute of Child Development. Please email us with any questions at lenem001@umn.edu, gmfergus@umn.edu, or cultureandfamilylife@gmail.com.

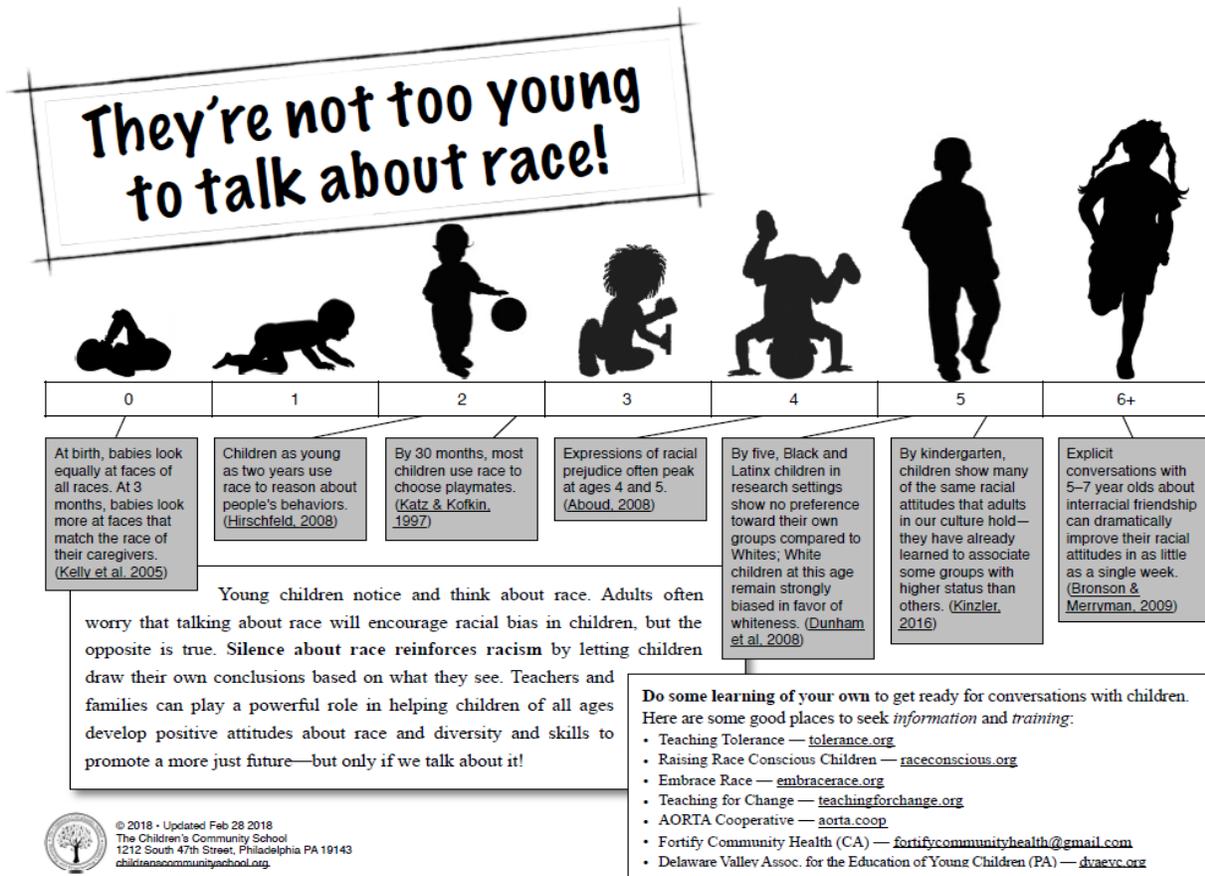
OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM THE RESOURCES

- Start early – there is always an age-appropriate way to talk about race and always a need, because children learn about race and racism automatically and from an early age
- Have more than one conversation – use natural opportunities to have discussions, but also don't wait for your child to bring questions to you or for there to be a "right time"
- Don't be afraid of messing up -- it's ok to also still be learning (*it's a life-long journey!*) and you and your child can learn together
- Don't just talk about *racism*, but also about Whiteness and White privilege
- Don't just *talk*, but do the self-work to develop critical self-reflection about your own complicity with racism and Whiteness – this self-reflection should then lead to changes in your actions and your child will see and learn from this

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING ABOUT RACE AND RACISM WITH KIDS STARTING FROM AN EARLY AGE

- *Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race*
 - https://www.academia.edu/3094721/Children_Are_Not_Colorblind_How_Young_Children_Learn_Race
 - Children being "colorblind" or not being able to see color or a race is a MYTH!
 - Research has shown that children recognize race from a very young age (~3 months) and develop racial biases by the age of 3-5 that do not always resemble the racial attitudes of the adults in their lives
 - A study was conducted that followed 200 black and white children who were between the ages of 6 months to 6 years and found that infants were able to nonverbally categorize people by race and gender by 6 months
 - 2-year-olds use racial categories to reason about people's behaviors
 - Children are motivated to learn and conform to the broader cultural and social normal that will help them function in society -- And NOT only their parents' beliefs
 - Children collect information from the world around them in order to actively construct their own beliefs

- How do children form racial biases at a young age?
 - Children’s cognitive structures are not mature – stereotypes help with categorization
 - They are able to categorize people by race but they aren’t able to categorize by different dimensions/features at once
 - Society teaches children that race is a social category
 - Society teaches children which categories are important
- *Your age-by-age guide talk to talking about race*
 - Parents Magazine. <https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/teaching-tolerance/talking-about-race-with-kids/>
 - Overview: Find out what children understand about racial differences and how to talk to them about it in our age-by-age guide.
- *It’s never too early to talk to children about race*
 - Yale News
 - <https://news.yale.edu/2020/06/15/its-never-too-early-talk-children-about-race>
- *They’re not too young to talk about race*
 - See this [handy graphic from The Children’s Community School](http://www.childrenscommunityschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/theyre-not-too-young-1.pdf) in Philadelphia: <http://www.childrenscommunityschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/theyre-not-too-young-1.pdf>



B. UNDERSTANDING RACE AND RACISM

- *Dr. Jones Allegories on race and racism*
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNhcY6fTyBM>. This YouTube video is a Ted Talk from Dr. Camara Jones and she shares four different stories and ties them into how race and racism affect people. Dr. Jones is hoping these stories will have others take action, help build awareness, and **understand the impacts of race and racism on our everyday lives. Recommended for discussions with teens or for parents themselves to better understand race and racism themselves so that when they talk to kids they have a bit more grounding**
 1. **Japanese Lanterns: Colored Perceptions – Race as a social construct**
 - a. Attending a garden party, she became fascinated by a group of pink, green, and blue moths – then she realized moths are naturally shades of brown, but were being colored by the lantern they are closest to
 - b. The colors we think we see are due to the lights by the way we look – the colored lights distort and mask our true variability
 - c. Racial categories we have constructed in society color our imaginations of who we and others are
 - d. We need to change the way we see color and understand the impact of the different racial categories we have constructed as a society and how this limits our understanding of our variability
 2. **Dual Reality: A Restaurant Saga – Racism as a system of inequity**
 - a. Studying with friends and went into town to get something to eat – while they are eating she noticed a sign that stated ‘open’, but on the other side of the sign, it said ‘closed’ because they had just transitioned past their closing time
 - b. Two-sided nature of signs that racism and other systems of inequity structure in reality today
 - c. It's difficult to recognize systems of inequality that privilege us because you are sitting on the inside – it's hard to know there's a two-sided sign, when the side you see only ever says ‘open’
 - d. It's a privilege in and of itself not to *have* to know about the two-sided nature of the sign. BUT, once you know about it, you can act
 - e. Racism structures open/closed signs in our society – a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value, based on the social interpretation of how we look; not only unfairly disadvantaging some but also unfairly advantaging others
 3. **Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale – levels of racism and the importance of focusing on institutional racism**
 - a. Buying a new house with flower boxes around the house, noticing some of the flower pots had soil and some didn't. So, filling in all the empty boxes with fresh soil, leaving the others with their original poor soil, and planting seeds in both – then three weeks later some pots were full of healthy flowers and others were not.

- b. Relates to the importance of the soil and environment tells us about institutionalized racism when you had the initial historical insult of the separation of the seed into the two types of soil
 - c. The relationship between three levels of racism can guide thinking about how to intervene and mitigate the impacts of racism on health
 - d. The gardener has the power to act and decide how to distribute resources, but **need to change the soil (policies, systems, norms – Whiteness) to make lasting difference**
- 4. Life is a Conveyor Belt: Moving to Action (from Beverly Daniel Tatum) – how to be antiracist**
- a. Living life, we are being carried along a moving walkway, contributing to racism through benign inaction – racism is most often passive!
 - b. If you don't like what's happening there are a few options:
 - o Close your eyes so you don't see you're moving along the walkway (denial)
 - o Turn around so you don't see where you're going and are looking the other way (colorblindness)
 - o If you truly don't want to go along with the status quo of racism, have to start actively walking backwards (antiracism) – in doing this you end up bumping into other people that may say 'hey, why are you bumping into me and where are you going?' which gives you a chance to bring others along with you in the antiracism journey
 - c. There are different actions people can take in order to be actively anti-racist
 - o Name racism
 - o Ask how racism is operating in a particular context
 - d. Organize and strategize with others
- o **Definitions:**
 1. Race: Is a social interpretation of how an individual looks in a race conscious society
 2. Racism: is a system structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how someone looks (which is what we call race); **not only unfairly disadvantaging some but also unfairly advantaging others (White privilege)**
 - o **Levels of racism:**
 1. **Institutionalized** – THE SOIL: differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race, embedded in laws and norms - ex: housing, education, medical facilities, clean environments, resources
 - a. explains why we see an association between race and class – this is NOT by happenstance
 - b. can be through acts of doing AND acts of not doing – often shows up as inaction in the face of need

2. **Personally mediated** – THE GARDENER: differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others by face and actions based on those assumptions
 - a. what most people initially think of when the term ‘racism’ or ‘racist’ is presented
 - b. includes prejudice and discrimination
 - c. can also be through acts of doing or not doing
 - d. can be unintentional and intentional
3. **Internalized**: acceptance by the stigmatized races of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth – accepting limitations of full humanity

C. TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT RACE AND RACISM

- *PBS KIDS: Talk about Race & Racism* - <https://pbskids.org/video/dots-spot/3047127185> - 30m
 - **This video would be helpful for parents who need help on how to talk to their children about racism at a child-friendly level – also, it’s just a good starting point to watch together**
 - First clip from “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood”
 - The characters have different physical characteristics and are still the same in other ways
 - Explaining how noticing different things about one another is a way to be able to talk about it which leads to being able to understand and respect them and also notice the similarities
 - Second clip from “Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum”
 - Showed how Rosa Parks stood up against racial injustice, fought for equality, and made a difference for African-American people in the U.S.
 - Third clip from “Arthur”
 - how to fight for the things you believe in and follow your conscience on things/rules you do not agree on or believe is fair; featured John Lewis as a character
- *PBS KIDS: Sesame Street - The Power of We* - <https://pbskids.org/video/sesame-street/3047592663> - 20m
 - Showing ways for children to stand up to racism - **this clip could be helpful for parents and teachers in learning ways to create safe environments at home or school and teaching ways to stand up to someone when they are being treated unfairly; also good to watch and discuss with your child**
 - Different ways to express yourself and express how you are feeling
 - Drawing- Good way to express yourself when you have big feelings/emotions
 - Singing- Helps you feel better and fun to do with others

- **Song and chants** on ways to stand up when you or someone else are encountering someone being a victim of racism – “being an upstander”
 - “You plus me makes the power of we. Build a better world for you and me. Let’s stand up for what is right. Listen, Act, Unite”
 - **Listen** – listen with your ears and your heart and to the people who are being treated unfairly
 - **Act** – standing up for yourself or someone else who isn't able to stand up for themselves
 - **Unite** – look for other upstanders to build a better community for everyone
- Different ways to spread positive messages within your community
 - Sidewalk chalk drawings
 - Drawing pictures or making signs
- *The White Parent’s Guide to Raising Anti-Racist Kids*
 - Christine Michel Carter June 12, & Carter, C. M. (2020, June 12). *The White Parent's Guide to Raising Anti-Racist Kids*. Parents. <https://www.parents.com/kids/responsibility/racism/the-white-parent-s-guide-to-raising-anti-racist-kids/>.
 - **Overview: Different practices or ways White parents can raise/talk with their children to prevent them from perpetuating racism and to help them be actively antiracist**
 - **Acknowledge that White privilege is real** – explaining how White privilege is used within the United States; due to skin complexion, there are societal advantages that White people have over people of color
 - **Don’t pretend color doesn’t exist** – if someone says they don’t believe color matters they are implying they can never be racist because they don’t see skin color. You have to be aware that we live in a diverse world where there are many people of different skin tones and backgrounds AND this shapes their lived experiences
 - **Answer questions about race honestly and factually** – if your child has questions about differences they see within people at school, in public, etc., answer honestly so they are aware and understand the differences
 - **Start talking to kids about racism early on** – can help bring awareness of the different cultures they can be exposed to and this can help shift the way children view others other around them
 - **Be a good role model** – children are constantly looking up to their parents and if they notice a practice behavior they will pick up on those cues – *(this is why it’s so important to be critically self-aware as well, because there are certain behaviors of yours that you may be less aware of that perpetuate racism)*
 - **Don’t hide your emotions** – emotions are natural, it’s helpful to talk about your emotions to show your child that emotions are ok and sharing them is normal
 - **Know it’s okay to feel uncomfortable** – it’s important to challenge yourself in ways that will make a difference and it’s time to get outside of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you are willing to try something new and risk messing up or feeling awkward

- *10 Tips for teaching and talking to kids about race*
 - <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/teaching-and-talking-to-kids>
 - 1. **Start early** - children start observing difference in the things around them early. Let your children know about the differences people have from one another and explain its okay to be different
 - 2. **Encourage your child to share** – let your child know it’s okay to ask questions and share different experiences and observations to gain a better understanding
 - 3. **Be mindful** – as a parent you are a role model for your child. Be aware of what you say and do
 - 4. **Know and face your own bias** – have your child watch you face your own biases so they can learn and see how to handle and overcome different situations (*and see you model antiracist actions*)
 - 5. **Know and love who you are** – talk and bring knowledge of the different backgrounds and cultural groups you identify with
 - 6. **Develop racial cultural literacy** – teach your child to learn and respect others and help them understand that people have different cultural backgrounds and due to this they have different practices that may be different (*including your own!*)
 - 7. **Be honest** – honesty is key, be sure to be honest with the history about the injustices and racial discrimination in the U.S. and with what ways they can help make a change
 - 8. **Tell stories** – telling stories about racial discrimination will teach and inform your child on what has been and is going on
 - 9. **Be active** - don’t be a bystander, help your child understand ways to make a change
 - 10. **Plan for a marathon, not a sprint** – children learn and understand things in different ways and times, make sure to have multiple discussions with your child across their development to make sure they understand

- *Talking to Children about Racism*
 - <https://extension.umn.edu/family-news/talking-children-about-racism>
 - Online article by Dr. Katie Lingras, Ph.D., University of Minnesota: “Katie Lingras is a child psychologist and former Extension Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC) Scholar. Over the last few weeks, many parents and caregivers have wrestled with the question of how to explain racial injustice, racism, and uprisings to their child or children. Below, Lingras shares a few common questions and some recommended suggestions.”

D. GOING BEYOND TALKING: ACTIONS AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

- *Actions speak, just as much as words: Why White Parents Need to Do More Than Talk to Their Kids About Racism* – Dr. Maggie Hagerman <https://time.com/5362786/talking-racism-with-white-kids-not-enough/>
 - The self work on the journey of antiracism is required of White parents to reinforce the words being said – it is not enough to just speak to kids about racism, your actions must also be in alignment with antiracism. This requires ongoing critical self-reflection

- Antiracist actions include critical awareness of the everyday habits that may be reinforcing racism – e.g. “when to lock the car doors, what conversations to have at the dinner table, what books and magazines to have around the house...when to roll one’s eyes, what media to consume, how to respond to overtly racist remarks made by Grandpa at a family dinner”
- *How To Teach Racial Acceptance*
 - <https://www.parentscanada.com/family-life/how-to-teach-racial-acceptance/>
 - **Overview:**-This website is targeted towards **teachers and schools** and provides good strategies on different ways teachers and schools can be **culturally aware and more accepting of racial and ethnic differences within the education system.**
 - What *schools* can do: incorporate social justice awareness in educational planning, be more realistic about the events happening in the US, enforce teacher training on how to handle racism in their classrooms and know how to properly communicate the messages to the children (ex: not just saying “she’s different”)
 - What *teachers* can do: enforce different voices, when teaching lessons give real lived experiences to help students understand the issues, giving anti-racism training and toolkits for all teachers, address anti-racism education through an intersectional framework (*how multiple components of identity are combined to create unique lived experiences*), exposing students to different realities of privilege, **teach how systems of oppression benefit one group of people while disadvantaging the other**, teaching accountability (making the whole classroom accountable rather than just one person)
- *If You Really Want to Make a Difference in Black Lives, Change How You Teach White Kids*
 - Webber, N. (2020, July 10). *If You Really Want to Make a Difference in Black Lives, Change How You Teach White Kids*. Education Post. <https://educationpost.org/if-you-really-want-to-make-a-difference-in-black-lives-change-how-you-teach-white-kids/>.
 - **Overview: Directed at teachers and school systems but also good for parents to reflect on as well**, especially as they are a child’s first educator and have a lot of power to influence educational systems
 - “The system that killed George Floyd and the system that raised and educated the cop who killed him are the same”
 - Focuses on the importance of how school systems have been failing on educating White youth and instead focusing on how Black youth need to be better
 - Most curriculum that is covered in schools is based on the White culture, centering Whiteness, which reinforces White privilege, and it is not inclusive of BIPOC children
 - The way to better help society and redress the injustices that have been happening to African Americans is to properly educate all children on Black history and Whiteness