



Deep Listening. Fostering Trust. Bridging Communities.

Talking to Children about Race
Community Dialogue & Storytelling
April 3, 2018

Thank you to Christ Church for hosting these listening circles. We would also like to thank our partners, Ex Fabula, Holy Family, Coalition, From The Same Dust, PACE, Toddlers and Kids on a Mission, and MilChiCo.

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Executive Summary

The Fellows & Facilitators' Talking to Kids about Race facilitated listening circle took place on April 3, 2018. During the event, participants were asked one question:

1. *Think back to a conversation about race -- EITHER one you had as a child with an adult OR one you had as an adult with a child. What was the experience and what did you learn?*

Participants were also asked to participate in a brainstorming activity on the use of the Erin Winkler principles, prompted by the following scenario, and follow-up question:

Driving through Milwaukee, a child says to you, "Why is everyone in this area (black/white/brown/a different color than me)?" Hearing this question, what principle listed in your brochure would you apply in the moment and how?

How would you continue to apply these principles with children in your daily life?

The final portion of the listening circle encouraged participants to make pledges. They were asked to share or write down one action step to practice having discussions about race with children. Participants were also encouraged to find accountability partners.

During the first round, many participants were introduced to the concept/reality of race after witnessing racist behaviors or encounters, or being the victim of racist behaviors. Participants shared stories of respected or loved individuals who made racist comments which resulted in a loss of respect. Remaining without the topic of racism within families, some participants reported having seen racist behaviors that was then never discussed amongst family members. Participants mentioned having asked questions about race as a child only to be reprimanded. In addition, many participants shared stories during which they reported feeling unprepared to handle questions about race from their children, described questions and observations they had as children, or how they answered questions from their own kids. Other participants however, explained not having discussed/ or discussing race at all, some because they witnessed tolerant behavior as children, others because they grew up in homogenous neighborhoods. Some participants mentioned active teaching as another method used to foster discussions about race with children.

During the Connected Conversation, several participants felt that asking questions was the most effective method to engage with children in conversations about race. Asking questions was a way for participants to transition to other methods such as talking about history, discussing unfairness, or encouraging observations. Another common response was to discuss race in the context of fairness. Several participants thought modeling behavior was the best approach. Participants felt that it was important for kids to see examples in conjunction

with words. Connecting the past, present, and future was also common. Participants felt it was important to discuss history and explain why change is important. A few participants felt being comfortable talking about race was important. Exposure was not a principle in the brochure, but several participants felt it was good to drive around different neighborhoods to illustrate racial divides. Some participants felt that discussions were unnecessary, or that they were unsure of how to approach them.

During Pledges, participants made pledges to continue practicing talking to children about race. Many participants wished to initiate more conversations about race with kids. Another common pledge was to introduce different cultures by going to restaurants in different neighborhoods or reading more multicultural books. Other participants wished to continue to educate kids more by discussing historical events or read history books to their children. A few participants pledged to address racism by confronting racist remarks. A couple of participants pledged to become more active in the community by donating books or starting a book drive.

Questions about this dialogue may be directed to:

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Listening Circle Analysis

Question Round One: “Think back to a conversation about race—either one you had as a child or one you had as an adult with child. What was your experience and what did you learn? ”

“We did not talk about race at home or in church. We were bussed to a white neighborhood.

We had to play near the fence while the White students played in the middle of the playground; White students could eat in the lunch room but the Black students had to eat in the yard. I didn’t think if it as a racial issue at that time. My Granddaughter is mixed. I tell her to think about the strawberry, vanilla and chocolate ice cream – she is the strawberry”.

“My uncle told my father a racially motivate joke in my presence, and my dad responded with complete silence which has become a useful tool to me as a signal of disapproval when others make racist remarks.

1.1 Witnessed Racist Behavior

A common theme in round 1 was witnessing racist behavior. Participants who shared stories that fell into this theme were impacted by negative, racist encounters with either family members or other respected figures. Typically, participants who shared stories of this nature were not on the receiving ends of these remarks or behaviors. Loss of respect was accompanied by these experiences. Racism did not stray far from home in this theme, as many participants witnessed racism from close family members as children.

1.1.1 Respect

Two participants shared stories of instances where someone they respected or were close to made racist remarks which resulted in shock and loss of respect. One participant was a student at a local private school in the North Shore of Milwaukee where his/her teacher asked what was “the difference between a “N***** & N*****”. The participant felt “disappointed that he even posed the question” and said, “his status in my life has diminished somewhat, which I consider sad”. The second participant relayed a similar story but within his/her family. This participant described growing up in a diverse neighborhood and he/she went to spend one summer with his/her favorite cousin. The participant described the incident:

“My cousin was ten years older than me, and I loved that she wanted to spend time with me during our visits at our home or at her home. I always looked up to her. During one visit, when I was 9, this all changed. I noticed that my cousin was making comments about the people we saw as we were driving through some parts of New Orleans. She talked about

"those people", who were Black or Brown, poor, and without any values [according to her], and she also used a lot of very racist words. I was very uncomfortable and could not tell her why. Silently, I wondered how my wonderful cousin could hold such awful ideas. I never felt comfortable with her again."

The second participants loss of respect for his/her cousin reflects another major subtheme, Racism in Families.

1.1.2 Racism in Families

Many participants witnessed racist behavior as children. Participants' experiences were diverse. Some participants came from families that appeared tolerant but did not display actions that reflected tolerance. One participant described his/her parents as "educated, and they seemed accepting of racial justice". This participant invited his/her classmate and friend over for dinner after playing at an event for his church, but he declined. When the participant went home, he/she talked about the event and inviting over his/her friend for dinner. In response to this information, the participant's mother "suddenly screamed at me and told me that I was never to date him because he was a Black man. Then she added that she was ashamed of me". This came as quite a surprise since the participant believed his/her mother "supported racial justice".

Racist behavior was not always masked. One participant shared a story about his/her mother's racist attitude and behavior. The participant shared this story:

"When I was in high school my mother and I took a train to visit universities in both Chicago and Boston. As we were walking through the streets of a town along the way, I noticed some signs that puzzled me: "colored washroom", "colored lunch room", "colored drinking fountain". I had never seen anything like these signs before, so I asked my mother what they meant. She grabbed my arm and yanked me along, without answering my question. I learned then that there were some questions I should not ask my mother. Some months later, when I came home from the university on break, my mother asked me if I knew that my friend - a white girl -- planned to attend Howard University. She would be the first white girl to attend this Black University. My mom also asked me if I knew that my friend was dating a Black man and I told her "Yes". She then asked me if I would date a Black man and I said yes, if I liked him. She then asked me if I would marry a Black man and I said yes, if I loved him. My mom left the room with a horrified look on her face and we never talked about this again".

Participants who shared similar stories often never discussed incidents of racism again. Another participant shared a similar story. The participant described an incident where his/her father "opened the car window and yelled some very racist comments at the group of Black

adults” when he/she was a teenager. The participant recalls being” shocked, and even mortified” but said “None of us ever talked about this incident”. Race was a taboo topic or racism appeared to be normalized in these situations. Participants who witnessed racism in their immediate family were left with a lasting impression despite never discussing the incidents. It is evident that this behavior was normal for the parents of these participants but uncomfortable for the participants.

1.2 Observations and Questions

Another major theme for round 1 was observations and questions about race from children. Some participants found themselves unprepared to deal with observations/questions, while other participants describe responses to children. A few participants recalled their observations from their childhood.

1.2.1 Unprepared

Many participants felt unprepared to handle the questions and observations about race from their children. One participant said, “I am here because I am ill-prepared to deal with race issues with my children, although I thought I was more than prepared”. This participant grew up in Boston and believed he/she had adequate knowledge of race until his/her child was “complaining about his skin and how it was different than mine”. Another participant’s child thought only Black people worked at McDonald’s. The participant shared:

“The first conversation I had with my children about race came as a surprise. We were on the way home from McDonald’s on 35th and Juneau [where all of the shift workers were African-American]. I mentioned that I used to work at McDonald’s when I was a teenager. My son asked, “Mommy, were you brown when you were a teenager?” Things he was seeing as a three-year old were informing his world. I was having a panic attack trying to figure out how to address that [because in his mind the only framework he had seen were that African-Americans are the people who work at McDonald’s]”.

A few of the participants who felt ill-prepared had adopted children of different races. One participant described an incident where his/her adopted son became upset after being told he was Black not brown. The participant explained that “people come in lots of different colors and while [my son’s] skin is actually brown; his race is African American and sometimes that is also called Black”. Unbeknownst to the participant, the issue went unresolved. The participant said “I thought that settled it, but one day he came home really upset because he was the Black child at his school. He’s never been called Black at home; he’s just our son. That experience gave me a wakeup call that we had been ignoring a huge part of his identity”. Another participant shared a similar experience. The participant relayed the story of how her son thought all people with brown skin were Indian. He/she explained:

"I have 4 children, 2 biological [white] sons and 2 [African American] girls that we foster. Recently, my 9-year-old heard me saying something about [one of the girls] being African American and he said "WHAT!? I know an African American!?" I asked what he meant by that, and he said he knew she was brown, but he thought that she was Indian because he thought all brown people were Indian. We didn't have much conversation about it because our kids are still so young, but it made me realize that we've never talked about it. We've never had our conversation. Even with a blended family dynamic, we have never talked about race. It's difficult to think about because the children are still so young. I don't know how we will approach it. "

Despite being part of diverse families, these two participants were surprised when their children began to make assumptions based on race. Both participants did not find it necessary to discuss race or even think about race until a specific situation underlined the need to address already formed ideas in the mind of their [sometimes still very young] children.

1.2.2 Childhood Observations and Question

A few participants described observations they made as children. One participant recalled asking his/her parents why kids were mean to the only black child in his/her school. He/she recalled:

"There was a little boy who was the only black in school. Kids were mean to him. I asked my parents why and they said some people don't like them [blacks people] Why? I asked again. Then my mom told me that she traveled in the south with my dad when he was in training. She said she almost lost a job for calling Mr. Wilson Mr. Wilson. She acted out the part of her boss who said, "You never call a n----r Mister. You call him 'boy'!!!" I never forgot that story".

Another participant shared a story about growing up in a white suburban area and participated in a simulation about racism at his/her high school. This participant described the simulation as such:

"Certain students in each grade were told to wear white t-shirts for a day, and other students were told to treat them in a certain discriminatory manner. Afterward, we talked about the history of racism in the United States. For me, the take-away at the time was that racism was something that happened in the past".

Later in this participant's life, he/she realized that racism as part of history was false and said "Racism is very much with us. We just do not talk about it much, until now". Responses to questions or observations about race inform children's view about race into adulthood. The

stories shared by these two participants highlights the significance of open and accurate discussions about race and racism.

1.2.3 Answers to Children

Some participants described how they responded to their children's inquiries about race. One participant shared with his/her daughter that he/she was attending a program about race, the daughter thought race referred to a competition. The participant listed ways that he/she discussed race and explained:

"My husband and I talk with our daughter about race in terms of difference: we talk about people having blue, green eyes, brown eyes; we talk about people having lighter hair and darker hair; we talk about people having lighter skin and darker skin; and we talk about other ways that people differ from each other. We also talk about the ways that people are the same. We talk about fairness and what is fair and what is not fair. We read books about people like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks, and talked with her in terms that she can understand at her young age".

Another participant mentions bringing home his/her African American foster daughter, and his/her son ran up to the baby and said, "mom we have a brown baby". The participant did not address the issue at that moment but relayed "I didn't address it but 6 weeks later I made a reference about African American and my son looked at me and said "she's (the foster child) is African American?". Both participants felt it was important to discuss race with their children at a young age.

A third participant described an incident where his/her oldest, adopted daughter made a racially charged comment. The participant's oldest daughter brought home a friend from boarding school who was Korean. The incident is described as follows:

"Over dinner, they began talking about race and different students at their school. My daughter pointed out that the Korean friend and another Asian student had different customs and traditions, to which the Korean friend responded, "he's Chinese, that's why", and my daughter said, "well all Asians look the same". I was mortified. I was actually shocked because I had never heard her say anything like that before. I made her apologize to her friend".

This participant saw this as a teachable moment and pulled aside his/her daughter and explained:

"We had a conversation about why what she said was inappropriate. I explained to her that there can be different ethnicities within a certain geography, and I used Africa as an

example, so she would understand it in terms of Black people. We talked about why generalizing is harmful. We still talk about it a lot since that happened"

1.3 No Discussion of Race

While some participants did not discuss race as children, they witnessed tolerant behavior. A few participants grew up in homogenous areas, and other participants did not talk about race while growing up.

1.3.1 Modeling Behavior

Two participants described instances where their parents modeled behavior around race. One participant shared:

"I have had no personal experience with children and having a conversation about race, ever; during my lifetime. However; my mother used to work and what was then called GIMBELS & SCHUSTER'S "department store and she work with other persons of color and got along with them well. My mother taught us all to respect other cultures and religions."

Another participant felt it was generational and shared a story about how neighborhoods were being integrated. The participant said "we were told to act natural so it would be impolite to point out someone had a limp. It was a matter of courtesy we didn't really discuss it".

1.3.2 Homogenous Upbringing

Some participants did not discuss race due to growing up in a homogenous area. One participant shared:

"I don't really have any stories that fit because I grew up in rural Iowa where everybody was white, went to college with all Norwegians, and then moved to Whitefish Bay. I had the opportunity to sign up with Unlearning Racism at the YWCA and I learned much that was shocking, but the most shocking was that only whites received G.I. Benefits. The economic effect of that is huge".

Some of the participants who grew up in homogenous areas often felt they lacked knowledge about race. Sometimes participants did sense that certain things were unfair but were sheltered from them. Participants wished that they understood more about racial issues.

1.3.3 No Discussion or Exposure

Other participants simply had no discussion or exposure to race. One participant grew up in Guyana where the population was mostly East Indian and African, and the whites were the minority. The participant did not understand race relations in the United States and said:

"When I came to America and went to college, everything was so segregated, and I just didn't get it. Black people sitting with Black people, white people with white people, and so on – all these little subgroups. I finally asked someone about it, and they explained some of the history of America to me."

This participant did not discuss race because it was not culturally relevant in Guyana. Another participant describes how integration in the 1970s was a shock. The participant described how he/she attended a predominately white high school until black kids who could not get to school were bussed to his/her high school. The participant said "There was no conversation at school or at home about the integration. It was a rude introduction to putting two cultures together". It was hard for this participant to understand as a teen the sudden changes that transpired in his/her high school.

1.4 Discussion of Race

Some participants shared stories where they discussed race with children or as a child. Sometimes, participants made it a habit to discuss race with children. Other participants used active teaching to discuss race with children.

1.4.1 Open Discussions

Participants shared experiences where they had open discussions about race as children or with children. One participant recalls a conversation he/she had with his/her parents after moving from India to Florida. The participant shared:

"My dad took me aside and told me that I may be uncomfortable because of some unpleasant experiences that could occur at this new school. I asked him what he meant, and he told me that some kids may taunt me because of the color of my skin, and that they may even threaten me."

The participant found a way to navigate race until 9/11 where he/she began to receive threats. As a teacher, the participant tries to encourage his/her students to see past differences. Discussion about race opens channels for understanding. Another participant shared this story:

"I was on a youth retreat with another church (All Peoples) and at our church we do race-based exercises. We discuss things about what its like to be a specific race and that trust has developed in our group. But a child from the other church was having a discussion with me and I felt the complete heaviness of distant from the child (he was black). I tried to think about ways I could help this but I didn't feel like I could"

Exercises like the one described above can help open new perspectives which will foster more dialogue. Discussions about life for people of different races would be a good way to bridge racial gaps.

1.4.2 Active Teaching

Another way participants learned about race was through active teaching. Some participants felt it was important to be proactive when teaching kids about race. One participant said:

"I brought home books having to do with the Civil Rights Movement. One about Rosa Parks brought up comments about fairness and unfairness. I talked about the different books as we read them, noting the different responses from my two kids."

Even though his/her kids were young, this participant felt it was important for his/her kids to begin making observations about race. Active teaching is also an opportunity to subvert racial stereotypes. One participant shared:

"I had a student - Black - with a twin in another classroom. His mother made it known to me that she was going to be present in my classroom often. She was a good parent. She was always in our building checking on her children and helping out in the classroom. In fact, she became the room parent in my classroom. She was in my classroom A LOT. We had a good rapport, and she was a big help. She told me that one day they were riding in the car and her son saw a Black man. He said, "He's bad." Another time she saw a picture of a doctor and said, "I'll never be a doctor." The child only saw people who look like her in negative images, so she thought that is all she could become. I'm learning how to navigate these awkward conversations. I had a father [of a student] who is a Black doctor [who] wrote a book [come and] speak to my class. That child was in awe at seeing this Black doctor before him!"

The participant used his/her position as a teacher to help subvert negative racial stereotypes. Not only did this child benefit from the lesson, other students probably learned to question racial stereotypes. Direct discussions are important, but examples of people or actions that go against stereotypes are impactful as well.

1.5 Experienced Racism

Several participants learned about race after experiencing racism. One participant shared:

"We did not talk about race at home or in church. We were bussed to a white neighborhood. We had to play near the fence while the White students played in the middle of the playground; White students could eat in the lunch room, but the Black students had to eat in the yard."

Racism was deeply impactful on participants. One participant described moving to a rural area and said:

"Here, for the first time, I began hearing some very hateful, racist words, all directed toward me. Other kids used the N word, and even worse. I was startled by the hate words, and I felt afraid. I did not know what to do or say to anyone, so I kept quiet and never told anyone about these experiences"

Like participants who witnessed racism, participants who experienced racism were confused as to why they were treated differently. Fear was common among participants in this theme.

Connected Conversation - *Driving through Milwaukee, a child says to you, "Why is everyone in this area (black/white/brown/a different color than me)?" Hearing this question, what principle listed in your brochure would you apply in the moment and how?*

"You need to know the history, but again how do you talk about it? A good resource is John Lewis' graphic novel autobiography "March", which encourages young people to have power and is an easy family read. Race history is the history of fairness. My work is action."

"I'm new to Milwaukee so I would try to understand so I'm comfortable. I don't know the history of Milwaukee, so I wouldn't know how to answer that question specifically. I would ask questions to see where the conversation goes and to gain context. I would look around and see what the child sees. For example, are they seeing homeless people who are all one race? People on their way to work or school? What is the context of their question? That would guide my answer."

2.1 Questions

Many participants referred to approach two, "ask questions", from the brochure in response to the scenario. Participants said that they would ask questions in response to their child or encourage additional observations. Participants said they would ask questions like "why they think that way" or "why they asked that question". Many participants felt it was important to understand the perspective of the child. One participant expressed "Kids question me, so I should be prepared to talk about it. I think asking them questions is the important part here". Participants questioned to encourage observations, introduce the history of racism, or discuss unfairness.

2.2 Fairness

Fairness was another common response by participants. Participants referred to unfair housing, redlining, and economic inequality. One participant suggested asking questions related to fairness and said, "I like the idea of framing it as a question of 'fairness.' If you describe someone else's situation a child will often say, 'well, that isn't fair!'. Another participant was not convinced about using fairness and worried that suggesting unfairness can cause people to sound like "oh the poor things". This theme suggests that participants want to highlight how racial difference correlates with a lower quality of life and why that is not acceptable.

2.3 Model Behavior

A few participants felt that modeling behavior was the most effective approach to the prompt. One participant expressed:

"My husband and I strive to be aware as parents, and this means that at times we just need to take a deep breath and dive in, not fully knowing what is ahead for us or for our daughter. We strive to model accepting and respectful behavior toward all people, both for our young daughter and in front of family and friends, and even in public places in front of people we may not know."

Another participant said they would "model a calmness related to various cultural groups" and be okay with "fumbling my way through these efforts". These sentiments about modeling behavior tie in with a theme from round 1 where participants were introduced to race by witnessing tolerant behavior as children. Participants who witnessed or experienced racist behavior as children were deeply impacted or confused. This theme suggests that participants are aware of the impact of their interactions with people of a different race.

2.4 Connect Past, Present, and Future

Connecting the past, present, and future was another common theme among participants. Overall, participants felt it was important to connect the history of racism to the present and explain why it needs to change. One participant shared that his/her daughter asked the same question in the prompt. The participant shared "we're always reading stories. I explained – trying to connect the past - in the 60s African-American families were shut out of certain neighborhoods". Another participant's son asked, "Why are all the people getting the meal black?". The participant took this opportunity to explain the history of housing discrimination and redlining and explained "there's lots of work being done but it's not an easy problem to fix".

2.5 Empower

Empowerment was mentioned several times in response to the prompt. Participants expressed desires to place children in positions in the community geared toward anti-racism. Two participants mentioned “Toddlers and Kids on a Mission” as a way for children to “engage with their ENTIRE community”. Another participant suggested “seeking out programs and organizations where the child could meet people from a variety of backgrounds”.

2.6 Talk about Race

Several participants wanted to become more comfortable talking about race with children. A participant said that he/she started attending events that discussed racial issue, because he/she felt it was important “to talk about issues with teens and help them make connections with a variety of people”. Another participant said, “It’s about being comfortable talking about racism”.

2.7 Exposure

Participants felt exposing children to race was the most effective approach. Some participants mentioned the “blue eye- brown eye experiment” or sharing stories “of child segregating own family by eye color, hair color, etc.” One participant felt it was unfortunate that “to be successful is to get out, and thus my kids lack knowledge of ‘real’ life.” Driving around neighborhoods was another method of exposure. One participant felt it was good to drive through certain neighborhoods rather than around them.

2.8 No Discussion or Unsure

Some participants did not feel discussions were necessary, or they were unsure of how to approach discussions. One participant shared:

“I don’t think I’ve learned enough about these approaches to answer this question. I personally don’t find the pamphlets beneficial. I grew up in New York and was around all black kids, I was the minority. I don’t get why we have to have these deep talks about race. My kid says “I met a black person today” So what? I didn’t learn these things growing up, I didn’t feel this way. I live in Glendale and it’s a highly mixed area. I don’t want to point out these differences to my kids. My wife hates all the things I’m saying.”

Other participants were concerned that talking about race was ineffective. Participants made statements such as:

“I don’t know how to address this scenario without thinking that this is a quagmire that if I address it will only feed the stereotypes inherent in the scenario itself.”

"I talk with diehard racists and feel I make no difference. Other woman says maybe you don't know what they might think about later."

It is clear through these testimonies that discussions about the race are difficult to have, as they call for a great amount of confidence as well as knowledge to positively engage in them. In addition, a certain capacity to deal with discomfort is needed to be willing to engage and answer questions from children that to end be very direct. Talking to kids about race can however potentially provide a healthier understanding of racial issues to children. Consequently, these same children will be less afraid to question racial dynamics and stereotypes, which can in the long run improve race relations in the future.

Parting Pledge – *"In order to practice having these discussions with children in your personal life, what's one action step you could pledge today? (Feel free to brainstorm with your small group if they're stuck. Write your pledge on a post-it note and on your brochure)"*

"Acknowledge my children are brown & awesome, ask questions, and help identify a hero of color for my children."

"As a teacher, I stop racism and racist comments in the classroom and with my own children. When I hear it I stop what we are doing and address it. If I let it continue I let it perpetuate, so I have to do my part to stop it. I also need to have a conversation with my own children about racism."

3.1 Conversations

Many participants pledged to initiate or have more conversations about race. Participants shared pledges such as:

"I will continue to be open to these conversations because I am on a journey."

"I need to have these conversations. I need to get more comfortable having them with my children."

"I will be open and give the child time to say what they want to say, acknowledging how important the topic is."

Another participant expressed concern about conversations over race. He/she said, "Remember that all children don't know their lineage – for a variety of reasons". This

participant explained that "My children were conceived through a sperm donor. I don't know all about their lineage to share it with them". This concern was shared by other participants who had adopted children from a different race in round 1. Several participants in round 1 were unsure of how to approach race with their adopted children. Some participants did not talk or think to talk about race until their adopted child brought up the subject. Listening circles such as this one help tear down stigmas around race. Continued discussions on how to talk to kids about race, especially in mixed families, might be beneficial.

3.2 Introduce Different Cultures

Another popular pledge was to introduce different cultures into the life of children. Participants made pledges such as:

"I'll buy multi-racial books for my grandchild"

"I'll take my family to restaurants or local stores in Harambee"

One participant said, "I will drive my kids around some other neighborhoods." In the Connected Conversation, driving was mentioned to expose children to the realities of racism. Pledges to introduce different cultures plays off the theme of exposure in the Connected Conversation. Community events in a variety of neighborhoods could present opportunities to explore new perspectives.

3.3 Educate

Education was another pledge theme. Participants expressed desires to discuss history and further educate their children. One participant said, "I will infuse history" and hoped that his/her kids would start to think critically about race. One participant pledged to talk about the 200 Days of Marches with his/her kids. Other participants wished to find historical books that were age appropriate. One participant pledged to show his/her child a "Sesame Street episode all about skin."

3.4 Ask Questions

A few participants wanted to ask their children more questions. Participants shared pledges such as:

"Acknowledge my children are brown & awesome, ask questions, and help identify a hero of color for my children."

"Ask more probing questions without fear of judgement, try to understand my children's thought process."

Pledges to ask questions is a continuation of a theme in the Connected Conversation. Participants felt that questions were an effective method for kids to learn about race. Asking questions was a way for parents to understand why kids asked certain questions. Asking questions was an approach that was often accompanied by other methods such as discussing history or fairness.

3.5 Address Racism

Some participants felt it was important to address or call out racism. This theme was more focused on individual action. Participants said things such as:

"Acknowledge and call out racism, encourage youth to lead and take power."

"As a teacher, I stop racism and racist comments in the classroom and with my own children."

When I hear it, I stop what we are doing and address it. If I let it continue I let it perpetuate, so I have to do my part to stop it. I also need to have a conversation with my own children about racism."

"I will become more aware of my own behavior and willingness to intervene when a conversation is uncomfortable."

Pledges to confront racism relates to modeling behavior in the Connected Conversation. Addressing racism is a highly effective way to introduce race to kids. As seen from responses in the first round, racist behavior and language has a lasting impact on kids. Participants who saw racist behavior expressed confusion as they shared that they did not understand the motivation behind racist behaviors at the time. Addressing racist behavior might allow kids to understand that certain behaviors or language is not acceptable.

3.6 Participate in Community

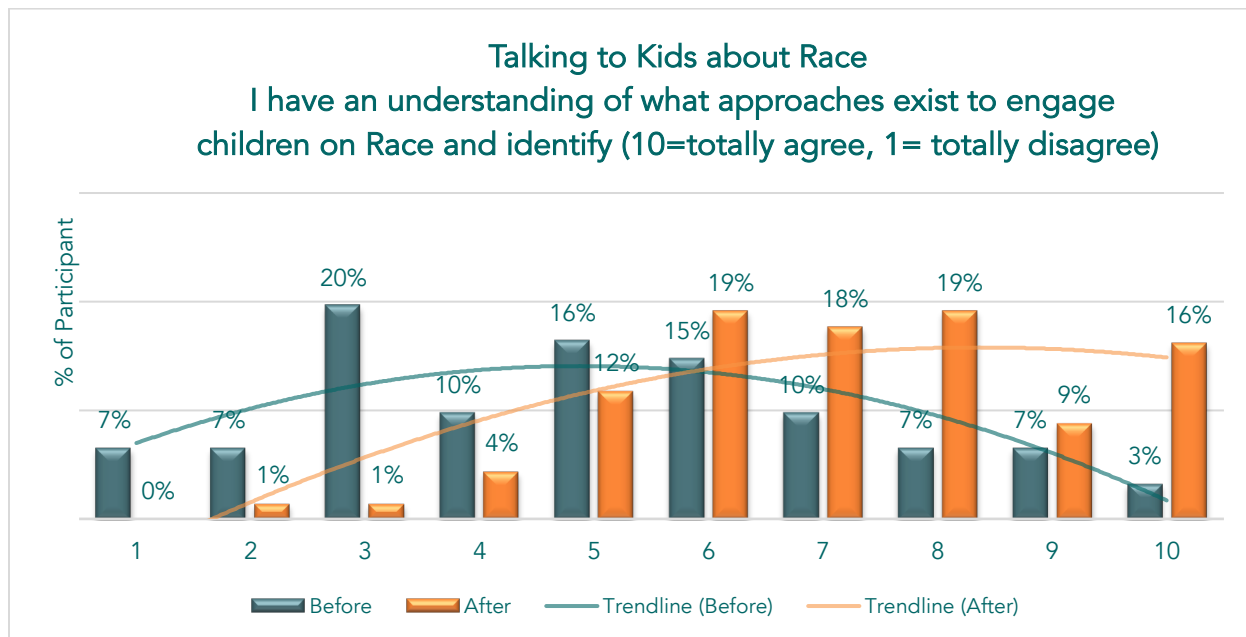
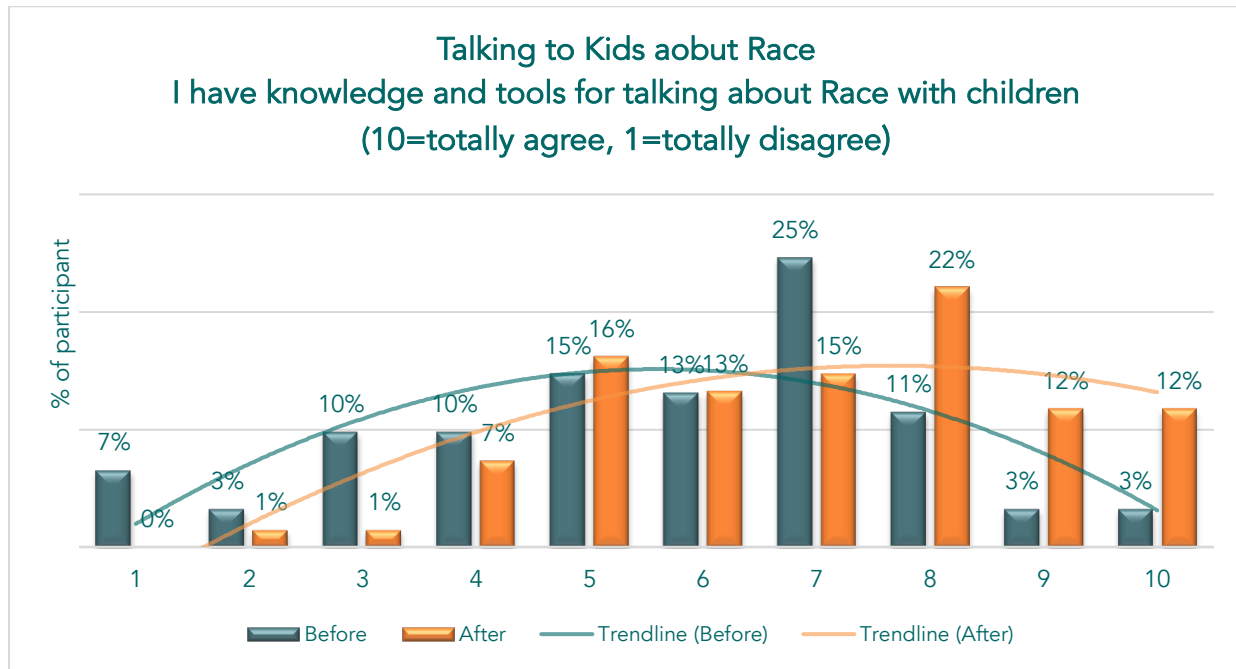
A few participants pledged to participate in community events and gatherings. Participants wished to:

"To start a book drive to saturate community on culture of color"

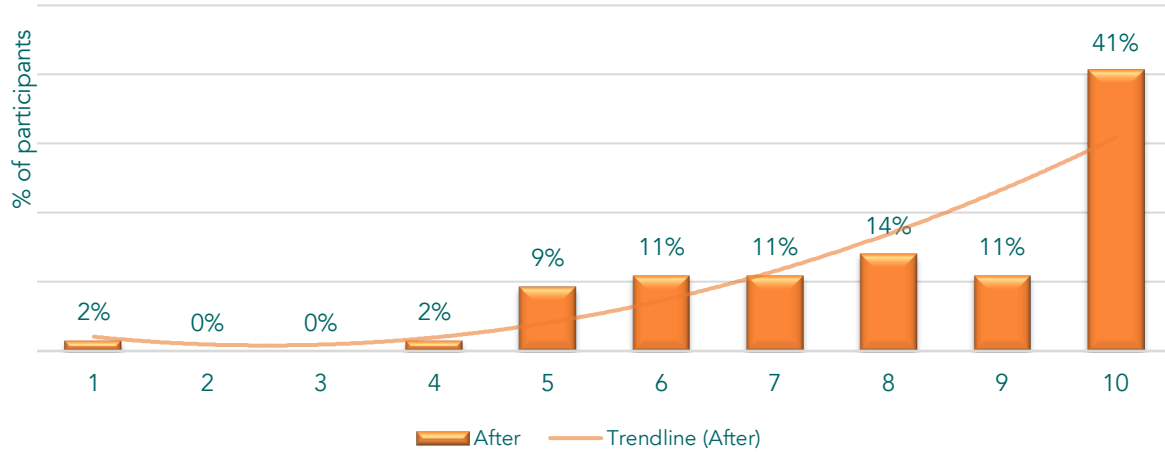
"Buy and donate multi-racial/cultural books to a childcare place."

Community activity was seen as a good way for people of different races to interact. Donating books or starting a book drive are easy ways to make knowledge about race more accessible.

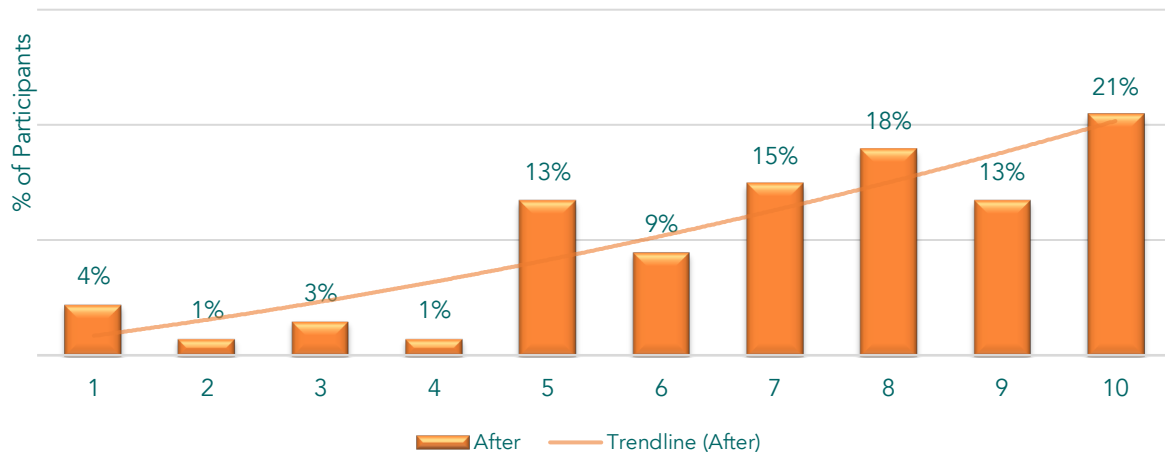
Feedback Forms



Talking to Kids about Race I have one clear action step pledge with an accountability partner

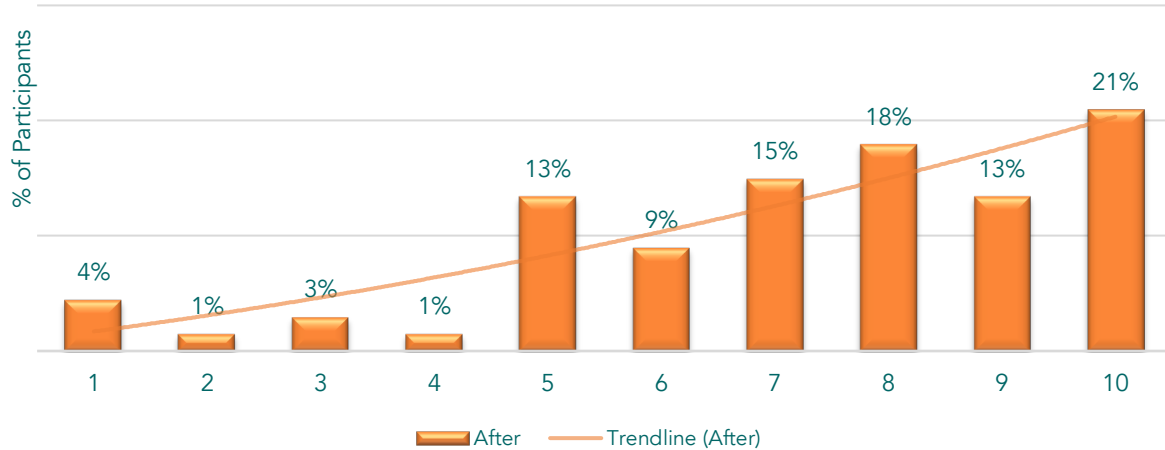


Talking to kids about Race This experience allowed me to practice asking questions about race and identify with children



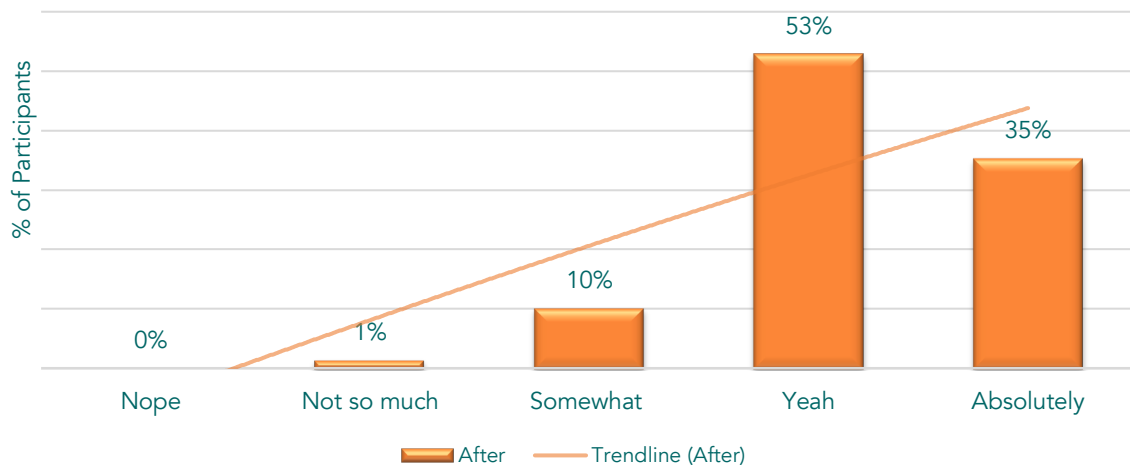
Talking to kids about Race

This experience allowed me to practice asking questions about race and identify with children



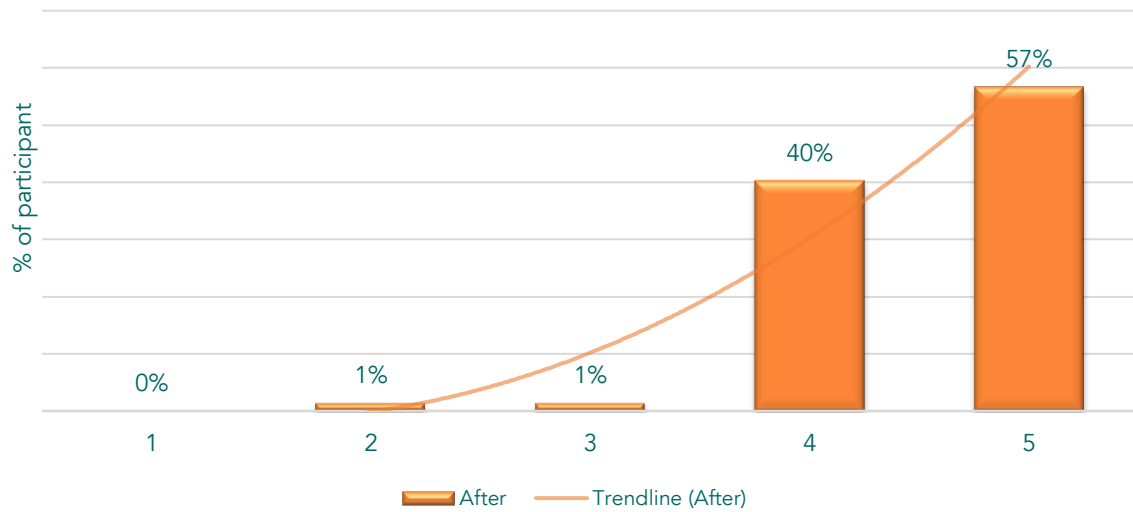
Talking to Kids about Race

Did the experience achieve the established goals (listed in the brochure)



Talking to Kids about Race

Are you likely to recommend this experience to others?



Question Round One: “Think back to a conversation about race—either one you had as a child or one you had as an adult with child. What was your experience and what did you learn? ”

1.1 Witnessed Racist Behavior

- My parents were from Illinois. We always lived in white neighborhoods until we moved to 27th and Hampton. There was a little boy who was the only black in school. Kids were mean to him. I asked my parents why and they said some people don't like them.(blacks) Why? I asked again. Then my mom told me that she traveled in the south with my dad when he was in training. She said she almost lost a job for calling Mr. Wilson Mr. Wilson. She acted out the part of her boss who said, “You never call a n----r Mister. You call him 'boy'!!!” I never forgot that story.
- I grew up in the south and got to know families of color. I loved them very, very deeply. I wept to my mother because people of color were being treated poorly. I can’t remember a specific incident but I remember the feelings I had. I wanted to know what I could do to keep them from being hurt.
- I was raised in Mississippi so I have a very strong connection to the Civil Rights history. I went to predominantly Black schools; I worked in the same but teachers were mostly White. I was struck by the difference in the students and teachers but we were not having discussions about what Black students were bringing to the table. There was colorism – students were told that they looked like burnt toast. Looking only at the skin makes us not valuable and keeps us from getting to the real issues.
- I had a grade school teacher who had the students draw a self-portrait that could be used in Seventeen magazine. She approached an African-American young man who had drawn his self-portrait and said, “If that's you in the future, shouldn't you put bars across your picture?” We have adopted a bi-racial child and I'm scared to death every day about what he will face in growing up.

1.1.1 Respect

- I am currently a student at a local private school in the North Shore of Milwaukee. My instructor ask me the difference between a “Nigger & Nigga” [colloquial term] . . . the experience made me crestfallen. I , up until that point had immense respect for the aforementioned instructor , however; I was so disappointed that he even posed the question, that now his status in my life has diminished somewhat, which I consider sad.

- I grew up in a very diverse part of a city and I played with all sorts of kids in our neighborhood and I also went to school with kids from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. When I was 9 years old, I spent a summer with one of my favorite cousins in a rural community near New Orleans. My cousin was ten years older than me, and I loved that she wanted to spend time with me during our visits at our home or at her home. I always looked up to her. During one visit, when I was 9, this all changed. I noticed that my cousin was making comments about the people we saw as we were driving through some parts of New Orleans. She talked about "those people", who were Black or Brown, poor, and without any values, and she also used a lot of very racist words. I was very uncomfortable and could not tell her why. Silently, I wondered how my wonderful cousin could hold such awful ideas. I never felt comfortable with her again.

1.1.2 *Racism in Families*

- We tried to have the right conversations. I'm not putting down my parents, but they put me in an all black club when I was 4 or 5. Club 44. I grew up with the black kids. I was the only white girl in the pageant. John Ashcroft put me on his knee and sang Thank Heaven for Little Girls to me. I was very confused. And I grew up seeing an imbalance of power. That was very confusing. When I was older I went out with a black man. My parents were against it. They said it was because of the difficulty mixed children would have
- When I was in high school my mother and I took a train to visit universities in both Chicago and Boston. As we were walking through the streets of a town along the way, I noticed some signs that puzzled me: "colored washroom", "colored lunch room", "colored drinking fountain". I had never seen anything like these signs before, so I asked my mother what they meant. She grabbed my arm and yanked me along, without answering my question. I learned then that there were some questions I should not ask my mother. Some months later, when I came home from the university on break, my mother asked me if I knew that my friend -- a white girl -- planned to attend Howard University. She would be the first white girl to attend this Black University. My mom also asked me if I knew that my friend was dating a Black man and I told her "Yes". She then asked me if I would date a Black man and I said yes, if I liked him. She then asked me if I would marry a Black man and I said yes, if I loved him. My mom left the room with a horrified look on her face and we never talked about this again. Some years later, I suffered from a severe depression and spent time in the hospital. In the hospital, I met a Cambodian girl who suffered from Anorexia. The hospital staff did not know why. I found a way to talk to this young girl and gradually she told me about the horrors that she witnessed while she was still living in Cambodia, including watching most of her family be killed, and she also told me that her mother feared that every time they went to gather food, she and her daughter might be

maimed or killed by a land mine. This young girl got better after telling me her story, and we became good friends, across race and culture and life experiences.

- In the neighborhood where I grew up, there was on Black family, with children near the ages of my sister and me. We all played together during summer evenings and some weekends. One of the games we played included a chant that ended "catch a --- by the toe". My mom told my sister and me to use the term "rabbit" rather than the more commonly used word. We did not know why rabbit was OK, or why the other word was not ok. We only knew that my mom told us to never use that other word, so we didn't. Some years later, when I was in my early teens, my dad and mom bought a car and one day my dad took us for a ride in that car. We were traveling east on Center Street near 8th Street, and suddenly my dad opened the car window and yelled some very racist comments at the group of Black adults standing on that corner. I was shocked, and even mortified. I think that my mom was too. None of us ever talked about this incident
- I was raised in a very rural area of Iowa, and I never saw any Black people. At school, when choosing teams, kids would sign-song the common chant that ended with "catch a --- by the toe". I never thought about the word that was used because all of the kids used this term. I lived in an area where there were lots of arrowheads. None of us ever thought about the people who had lived here before us, people of a whole different culture. I was 5 years old when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr was shot and killed. Both of my parents were educated, and they seemed accepting of racial justice. In high school, one of my classmates and I both played the French Horn. The two of us became good friends. We spent a lot of time together during school time. One day he invited me to go with him to his church to play together for an event. We played for about an hour and afterward, I asked him to come to our home for supper. He declined, and said that it would be better if he did not come. I said OK, but wondered why. When I got home, I told my mom about our afternoon, and how our music pleased the audience. I also told her that I had invited my friend for supper but that he was not able to attend. As I was telling her about this, my mom suddenly screamed at me and told me that I was never to date him because he was a Black man. Then she added that she was ashamed of me. I have never forgotten this. I wondered how my mom, who I thought supported racial justice, could think this way. My mom and I have never even once talked about this.
- This is when I was 11, I had really frizzy hair. I was with my family and we were in Chicago coming back from dinner and the conversation was surrounding my hair. But my grandmother said that's what we call "nigger hair". That moment really helped me understand what others feel like. I know I cant feel what Black people feel but in that moment I was just so hurt. I felt bad for the cab driver because he was Black and had to hear that.

- As a teen I was in the backseat of our car, when my 'sweet old grandma' casually used the 'N' word and my mother turned around and said, 'we don't used that word in our family.'

1.2 Observations and Questions

- I have a 4 year old biological son and my husband and I adopted a Biracial Child [boy] One day during a walk in our neighborhood we passed a yard sign that read. . . "BLACK LIVES MATTER" my 4 year old was so questioning and curious and the questioning was relentless. Now that I look at it is a good thing, it will be the basis now of a continuing discourse, which I am certain will be edifying for us both.
- My parents adopted my sister from Korea. My parents got books from Asia. We learned about Korean hair. She was 2.5 when my parents adopted her. I never really thought about her racial difference. One day she asked, "Mom, when I get older will I look like you and Hannah? That was the first time that I realized that I was in the majority. That was my first introduction to what that feels like, and to not have to worry what it feels like to be in the minority
- I have three boys adopted from Micronesia. They have the same biological family and are 4, 3, and 2. The oldest is in pre-school and is developing friends in the community. I've known empirically they're a different race but it never occurred to me that it might matter to them. I got highlights in my hair, making me look even less like them and my 4 year old was inconsolable. At his school, everyone is quick to point out differences, he said "People will pick on me". I want to educate myself but let him know he is more than race. I don't have the tools yet to discuss this. I asked the birth mother about their heritage and she can share some of it with me, I need to find the tools to discuss this more and honor his curiosity.
- I grew up in a white suburban town, and my family was the only Asian family, so we were THE diversity. We were the only minorities around, and I noticed that I was different in elementary school. At the time, I didn't want to be different – I wanted to be white. I wanted so badly to experience the dominant culture, and at the time Asians were considered the "model minority" so I tried really hard to be that. It wasn't until college that I embraced my race. That was the first time I had Asian friends, and they really helped me see the importance of loving my heritage and not trying to become something else. We started a multicultural group on campus to expose others to different kinds of people. That helped me realize that most of my childhood was fake – I was trying so hard to fit in and I never did. I really wish I had that realization at a younger age, the realization that I was Asian, and I was enough, and I didn't need to be anything else.
- I had a foster daughter who was African American. I also have two biological sons. When my wife walked in the night I brought her home, my son ran up to her and said "mom we

have a brown baby.” I didn’t address it but 6 weeks later I made a reference about African American and my son looked at me and said “she’s (the foster child) is African American?”

1.2.1 Unprepared

- As a teacher I always notice how fragmented race was in the school system. I was always a white teacher surrounded in colored classrooms. I am here now because the other day my son asked if our church was racist because there were only white people? I want to learn how to handle these situations and make our life less fragmented.
- Over spring break in Florida, my daughter got a sunburn and her skin began to get dark. My daughter said she doesn’t want dark skin. I then jumped on the situation, rather than asking why or what makes her feel that way, making me feel like I handled it poorly. I want to learn how to handle the situation better in the future.
- The first conversation I had with my children about race came as a surprise. We were on the way home from McDonald’s on 35th and Juneau [where all of the shift workers were African-American]. I mentioned that I used to work at McDonald’s when I was a teenager. My son asked, “Mommy, were you brown when you were a teenager?” Things he was seeing as a three-year old were informing his world. I was having a panic attack trying to figure out how to address that [because in his mind the only framework he had seen were that African-Americans are the people who work at McDonald’s].
- I am here because I am ill-prepared to deal with race issues with my children, although I thought I was more than prepared. I grew up in inner-city Boston, as a white kid in a predominantly colored system. All my best friends were colored, so I thought I had a pretty good grasp on the idea of race and minorities. But now, my children are mixed and have darker skin than me. My four year old was complaining about his skin and how it was different than mine. I didn’t know how to deal with it, but I wanted my kids to know that they are similar but different, and that’s okay. My son’s should feel good about their skin.
- Oldest daughter (5 years) described friend at school using descriptors about her clothes, her hair, etc. When I met her friend, I discovered she was the only black girl in daughter’s class. I was so confused as to why she didn’t say that when describing her friend. I realized that she “was not aware of that being a descriptor”. I was unprepared for that and it made me reflect on my own biases. Realizing my daughter is like a sponge and is an empty slate I want to be prepared to help her remain informed and unbiased as long as I can and that it starts with me.
- During a volunteer opportunity my child asked “How do you say ‘Hello’ in Spanish?” At first I couldn’t figure out why my child was asking this until they saw a black person and wanted to say “Hola” to them. I made the connection that my child has a classmate who is black and speaks French. In my 4 year old’s child mind she the connection that black

people speak a different language, because her classmate did, and any foreign language must be Spanish. Ergo, to speak to a black person she should know Spanish. I felt it was sweet that my child wanted to connect and also realized that my children were connecting these dots but needed help, to “unwrap it for them”

- I have 4 children, 2 biological [white] sons and 2 [African American] girls that we foster. Recently, my 9-year-old heard me saying something about [one of the girls] being African American and he said “WHAT!? I know an African American!?” I asked what he meant by that, and he said he knew she was brown, but he thought that she was Indian because he thought all brown people were Indian. We didn’t have much conversation about it because our kids are still so young, but it made me realize that we’ve never talked about it. We’ve never had our conversation. Even with a blended family dynamic, we have never talked about race. It’s difficult to think about because the children are still so young. I don’t know how we will approach it.
- We have 3 biological adult sons who are out of the house, and now one 7-year-old African American son we adopted. We never talked about race with him, we were waiting for him to bring it up or ask about it, so last summer when he was 6 it finally came up. I was driving him and his friend somewhere and I hear them talking in the backseat. My son mentioned something about being brown and his friend laughed, saying “you’re not brown, you’re Black”. My son looked horrified. They went back and forth for a little bit between Black and brown, so finally I jumped in and explained to them that people come in lots of different colors and while [my son’s] skin is actually brown, his race is African American and sometimes that is also called Black. I thought that settled it, but one day he came home really upset because he was the Black child at his school. He’s never been called Black at home; he’s just our son. That experience gave me a wakeup call that we had been ignoring a huge part of his identity.
- My daughter is 4 years old, and recently she’s started to identify color. The other day we were at Applebee’s and there was a group of women sitting together at a table near us. My daughter saw them and asked, “Why are all of the Black women sitting together?” I tried to answer, but I couldn’t find the words, so I reduced it to something like “they’re just all friends and friends like to hang out together”. I didn’t know how to talk about people being drawn to people who are similar to them, so I skirted around it. Looking back, I’m ashamed of that. She’s about to go to a school where she will probably be the only white child in her class, so I need to prepare her for that. She’s grown up so far in an area that is ethnically diverse, but not diverse in color – there are lots of French, Irish, and German people around us. I don’t want to ignore race because I know she’s going to have more questions. That’s why I’m here. I’ve taught my children to be open-minded and just accept people as they are, but I realize they also need to have an understanding of race.

- My son brought home the school's yearbook, and upon looking through it there was a picture under the 'Republican Party Club' that said '#BuildtheWall'. I was mortified that this was present in my children's education, and has apparently been so for years. I realized that there is a lack of conversation between families and the school, and myself and my children.
- I provide theatre education programs to inner city schools. Recently, there were two situations I remembers: first, a white, black, and asian child were working together to discuss similarities and differences among themselves. The white child said, "Well, I'm white, you're black, and you're asian," when the asian child cut them off saying, "You can't say that. That's not right." The black kid then said, "No, they're right, I'm black, they're white. That's true." The second story is when students were reconstructing the ending of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. An asian child said that the bears would call the cops on Goldilocks, and a black child said that they would arrest the bears. These two experiences made me realize how little we know about children's lives, especially them of a different color.
- I've been a part of Pace ongoing for 15 years and my child was in the same class as the co-founder's child. When in first grade, the co-founder's daughter, who is black, was waiting after school with my daughter. The school had student's attending via Chapter 22 and were bussed home. A boy kept telling the black girl that she needed to get on the bus so they could leave. Eventually, my daughter told the boy "She is not going!" I did not address it with my daughter at that time, but I wish I had. As a parent I make mistakes but if we can say "I don't know" and "Let's talk", that's part of doing things that are hard but necessary. It's not enough but I don't want to be on my heels trying to figure it out. I have to say more than my parents did. I want to be prepared. I want to be aware of how they (children) view it. Seeing a black kid bussed home was the only exposure except tv, I want to expand that view. I wasn't multicultural but I want my children to be.

1.2.2 Childhood Observations and Question

- My parents were from Illinois. We always lived in white neighborhoods until we moved to 27th and Hampton. There was a little boy who was the only black in school. Kids were mean to him. I asked my parents why and they said some people don't like them.(blacks) Why? I asked again. Then my mom told me that she traveled in the south with my dad when he was in training. She said she almost lost a job for calling Mr. Wilson Mr. Wilson. She acted out the part of her boss who said, "You never call a n----r Mister. You call him 'boy'!!!" I never forgot that story.
- I grew up in a white suburban area in Michigan with an entire white student body. One year, all students participated in a simulation activity. Certain students in each grade were

told to wear white t-shirts for a day, and other students were told to treat them in a certain discriminatory manner. Afterward, we talked about the history of racism in the United States. For me, the take-away at the time was that racism was something that happened in the past and was not part of our current culture, which I later learned was false. Racism is very much with us. We just do not talk about it much, until now.

1.2.3 *Answers to Children*

- We go to a multi-ethnic church. After Sunday school one Sunday my daughter came to me and said, "Mrs. B and I were the only two yellow people. Everyone else was Black. Why were we the only two yellow people?" She is only three. I explained to her that God loves everybody. He doesn't care about the outside. We had a conversation about being OK with being with people who are Black.
- I don't recall talking about race as a child. I grew up in a homogeneous Indiana town. In our home, we were at dinner and my seven year old talked about the National Anthem and how it is not fair to everyone. He said he knew all about slavery because he read a book about it, so we talked about that. In another situation we watched a show where a highschooler wanted to play basket ball but lost his arms. He became the token player in his school. He hit a three-pointer and was everyone's favorite. I asked what was different about him and my son said that he had no arms. He didn't mention that he was the only black player.
- When I told our 5 year old daughter that I was coming to this program on race, she said "I hope you win". I had to think about this for a minute before realizing that she meant a race, on a track, something that you can win. My husband I talk with our daughter about race in terms of difference: we talk about people having blue eyes, green eyes, brown eyes; we talk about people having lighter hair and darker hair; we talk about people having lighter skin and darker skin; and we talk about other ways that people differ from each other. We also talk about the ways that people are the same. We talk about fairness and what is fair and what is not fair. We read books about people like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks, and talked with her in terms that she can understand at her young age. The list of approaches provided to us will help us with further such conversations over the next decade of her life
- I have two adopted daughters who are Black, they are 11 and 15. My oldest goes to a boarding school and she has a very diverse group of friends. One weekend, she brought home a Korean friend over to stay with us. This was her first friend who isn't Black or white, which is important for this story. Over dinner, they began talking about race and different students at their school. My daughter pointed out that the Korean friend and another Asian student had different customs and traditions, to which the Korean friend responded, "he's

Chinese, that's why", and my daughter said, "well all Asians look the same". I was mortified. I was actually shocked because I had never heard her say anything like that before. I made her apologize to her friend and we had a conversation about why what she said was inappropriate. I explained to her that there can be different ethnicities within a certain geography, and I used Africa as an example, so she would understand it in terms of Black people. We talked about why generalizing is harmful. We still talk about it a lot since that happened.

- I had a foster daughter who was African American. I also have two biological sons. When my wife walked in the night I brought her home, my son ran up to her and said "mom we have a brown baby." I didn't address it but 6 weeks later I made a reference about African American and my son looked at me and said "she's (the foster child) is African American?"

1.3 No Discussion of Race

1.3.1 Modeling Behavior

- I have had no personal experience with children and having a conversation about race, ever; during my lifetime. However; my mother used to work and what was then called GIMBELS & SCHUSTER'S "department store and she work with other persons of color and got along with them well. My mother taught us all to respect other cultures and religions.
- This took place in the early 60s when the neighborhood was being integrated. Groups of white and Black parents came to the school to facilitate integration. Then we were told to act natural so it would be impolite to point out someone had a limp. It was a matter of courtesy we didn't really discuss it. I was in the 2nd or 3rd grade.

1.3.2 Homogenous Upbringing

- I am from a small town in northern Wisconsin. I thought my town was all White. Someone finally pointed out that one of the boys was from an African-American family. I remembered having feelings that Black was not as privileged as White. Later, I moved to Milwaukee and I was placed in a school with blacks and I found myself wishing someone had [previously] had a conversation with me [about race].
- I don't really have any stories that fit because I grew up in rural Iowa where everybody was white, went to college with all Norwegians, and then moved to Whitefish Bay. I had the opportunity to sign up with Unlearning Racism at the YWCA and I learned much that was shocking, but the most shocking was that only whites received G.I. Benefits. The economic effect of that is huge!
- My son has blonde hair and blue eyes. When I divorced he split his time between very diverse Rockford and a small farm town with only one black family. I wonder if we had

enough talks with him. Looking back now, I wonder if I helped perpetuate the very thing I was trying to avoid with my son.

1.3.3 No Discussion or Exposure

- There was never a talk about race growing up, despite having very accepting and welcoming parents. I want My son to grow up differently, to have the tools for conversation, to show the depth of the issue, and to register acceptance and understanding.
- I grew up in a diverse area near 51st and Center. My dad taught in a summer school to get boys from the area to go to Marquette High. More of our conversations at home were social justice areas. Once I had my own children I felt that I would NOT have those conversations with my own children. I moved to the suburbs and raised them in a mostly White neighborhood. I now realize the need to change my viewpoint and my tactics on how I am raising my children.
- I grew up in Guyana, which was formerly a British colony, but now it is mostly populated with East Indians and Africans, so white people are the minority there. Overall though, it's pretty mixed ethnically and religiously. I was raised in a family that embraced differences – I was raised on acceptance, inclusion, and diversity. When I came to America and went to college, everything was so segregated, and I just didn't get it. Black people sitting with Black people, white people with white people, and so on – all these little subgroups. I finally asked someone about it, and they explained some of the history of America to me. That made me think about how much "easier" my life was in Guyana. I was in the minority racially, but it never mattered. Now I wonder what my responsibility for racial equity in America is. I look white, no one would assume I'm "foreign", so what is my new responsibility as a white woman in America?
- I don't remember talking about race when I was younger I should saw it acted out. I do remember having a conversation with my oldest son's friend(son is twenty) and he asked me why do you care about issues with race? Why does [her son] treat people of different colors with dignity. I think like my parents I never discussed it but I showed it with my actions, I communicated about race with my actions. I never had a direct conversation and I know now though that modeling isn't enough.
- In high school 1974 to 78 I went to a predominantly white school. Black kids who were having difficulties were bussed to my school. There was no conversation at school or at home about the integration. It was a rude introduction to putting 2 cultures together. Before the Black students came there was an open campus - After the Black students came the campus was closed; Before the Black students came there were glass doors – After the Black students came there were metal doors; Before the Black students came there were

open windows – After the Black students came there were bars on the windows, security in the halls and only 2 open bathrooms

- I watched 'Roots' as a seven year old, had many questions for my parents, but no relationship in my own life to connect with my feelings of pity and guilt.
- My parents were wonderful, but I was sheltered from diverse experience and while my mom still struggles with prejudicial language, we are both trying to grow in our understanding.

1.4 Discussion of Race

1.4.1 *Open Discussions*

- I grew up in Cleveland, OH, where I was the only black student in a white Jewish suburban school. I never had a problem fitting in with the students growing up, and my parents always told them that blackness is excellence. But, in high school, minority students were encouraged to visit white liberal art colleges together to make the trip more comfortable, a trip called minority weekend. On the bus ride to the colleges, we passed the Klan. It was very scary,, but the scariest part was that the Klan had a permit, and thus it was legal.
- I grew up in a diverse area near 51st and Center. My dad taught in a summer school to get boys from the area to go to Marquette High. More of our conversations at home were social justice areas. Once I had my own children I felt that I would NOT have those conversations with my own children. I moved to the suburbs and raised them in a mostly White neighborhood. I now realize the need to change my viewpoint and my tactics on how I am raising my children.
- We tried to have the right conversations. I'm not putting down my parents, but they put me in an all black club when I was 4 or 5. Club 44. I grew up with the black kids. I was the only white girl in the pageant. John Ashcroft put me on his knee and sang Thank Heaven for Little Girls to me. I was very confused. And I grew up seeing an imbalance of power. That was very confusing. When I was older I went out with a black man. My parents were against it. They said it was because of the difficulty mixed children would have.
- When I was 13 our family moved from India to Florida and my parents enrolled me in the neighborhood school. As I prepared to leave for my first day of middle school, my dad took me aside and told me that I may be uncomfortable because of some unpleasant experiences that could occur at this new school. I asked him what he meant, and he told me that some kids may taunt me because of the color of my skin, and that they may even threaten me. That never happened. I found a way to move between different racial and ethnic groups. I did experience a lot of threats after 911, and I had to figure out how to respond to these threats in a way that did not escalate situations. Today, I am a teacher, and I encourage my students to find ways to see beyond differences and I also encourage

them to speak up if they do see someone threatened by others, because of race, or religion, or other differences.

- This may so a little unorthodox but I grew up having conversations about race but didn't know it was about race. But when I was teaching the Dominican Republic, there was tension with Haitians and ____ (didn't hear the other group and forget to ask her about other groups she mentioned). So I learned a lot about race by watching it.
- I was on a youth retreat with another church (All Peoples) and at our church we do race-based exercises. We discuss things about what its like to be a specific race and that trust has developed in our group. But a child from the other church was having a discussion with me and I felt the complete heaviness of distant from the child (he was black). I tried to think about ways I could help this but I didn't feel like I could.
- I am very open with my daughter. I tell her that we are very diverse but all human beings; all the same. I told her that I don't care if she likes a boy who is another race. I went to elementary school with mostly Hispanic kids and then I went to a predominately Black school. I never felt different there because I am Hispanic and used to being in different environments.
- When my children were small, they would always ask me why people are black and I would tell them because god made them that way. Everyone has a different color skin but we're all the same. IN school kids would call them the "N" word. We are not Black but I always felt I was described that way because we were treated differently, like Black people.
- I came home from school one day and my mother told me that a new Black family moved in across the street. I asked her why she said they were black and she said because they are – it's just a fact. Then she said "I love Black people. My secretary is Black." I was thinking my parents are flawed; I am flawed. I went to a school named Rolling Meadows. Some used to call it Rolling Ghettos. I am grateful for the diversity. I have 2 very White boys with very White friend.

1.4.2 Active Teaching

- I feel like I handle situations typically well, because of the diversity present in my household. But recently, my black son was demoralized at school by a white kid calling him names. My son wasn't necessarily hurt by the other student, but the other student's crazy parent who was not aware on how to talk about race constructively blamed my son, which is what really hurt him. Kids are like sponges and there will always be problems, but a huge step in the right direction is parenting. I teach my son to be calm, to be proud of his skin and culture, and introduce him to different cultures to register empathy and understanding.
- I took my young kids on a road trip to Montgomery, AL, and visited the Rosa Parks museum. At first, my children hated the trip because they were tired and early. But at the

museum, my children were excited and completely engaged. They then began to ask really big questions, such as “Why were people treated that way?” which I didn’t know how to completely answer. I learned that to learn and explore race issues you need to force your comfort level and encourage empathy through education and experience.

- As a parent of two young children I brought home books having to do with the Civil Rights Movement. One about Rosa Parks brought up comments about fairness and unfairness. I talked about the different books as we read them, noting the different responses from my 2 kids. My six year old boy is a quieter person. He was hesitant to say what he thought. I wondered if it was due to discomfort or if he was just deeper in thought. My 4 yr. old daughter asked a lot of questions very matter-of-factly. I wanted to talk in depth with them but not overwhelm them or present a bias. It was like a tightrope walk.
- I had a student - Black – with a twin in another classroom. His mother made it known to me that she was going to be present in my classroom often. She was a good parent. She was always in our building checking on her children, and helping out in the classroom. In fact, she became the room parent in my classroom. She was in my classroom A LOT. We had a good rapport, and she was a big help. She told me that one day they were riding in the car and her son saw a Black man. He said, “He’s bad.” Another time she saw a picture of a doctor and said, “I’ll never be a doctor.” The child only saw people who look like her in negative images so she thought that is all she could become. I’m learning how to navigate these awkward conversations. I had a father [of a student] who is a Black doctor [who] wrote a book [come and] speak to my class. That child was in awe at seeing this Black doctor before him!
- I actually took this away from the first session we had with Talking to Children about Race, I made a comment about being color blind and someone in the group explained that that could mean that a persons color is superficial and what’s inside is what matters. Especially with children you let them voice how they feel and you talk about it. So I’m a school teacher and a child in class said to another child “you have brown skin.” I usually would’ve brushed it off and redirected to things we have in common but I said yeah he does. What color is yours? I recognized that we all had different skin and that was okay. Adults can put judgements on it, but kids just notice the differences. Yes, we’re different and that’s not something we have to be quiet about.
- My uncle told my father a racially motivate joke in my presence, and my dad responded with complete silence which has become a useful tool to me as a signal of disapproval when others make racist remarks.
- As a 9 year old my parents took me to a Native American reservation to give me the experience of another culture. I walked into the classroom of Native Americans and felt strongly a rejection that later turned to my admiration for the gifts of a different culture.

1.5 Experienced Racism

- I feel like I handle situations typically well, because of the diversity present in my household. But recently, my black son was demoralized at school by a white kid calling him names. My son wasn't necessarily hurt by the other student, but the other student's crazy parent who was not aware on how to talk about race constructively blamed my son, which is what really hurt him. Kids are like sponges and there will always be problems, but a huge step in the right direction is parenting. I teach my son to be calm, to be proud of his skin and culture, and introduce him to different cultures to register empathy and understanding.
- I grew up in Cleveland, OH, where I was the only black student in a white Jewish suburban school. I never had a problem fitting in with the students growing up, and my parents always told them that blackness is excellence. But, in high school, minority students were encouraged to visit white liberal art colleges together to make the trip more comfortable, a trip called minority weekend. On the bus ride to the colleges, we passed the Klan. It was very scary,, but the scariest part was that the Klan had a permit, and thus it was legal.
- My father is Black. My mother is White. In the 70s we had to daily answer the question of whether we were Black or White in school each day. We had to raise our hands, and the teacher would count how many of us were Black and how many of us were White. One day I raised my hand and asked my teacher, "What if you're both?" He laughed it off and said, "What do you mean both? Both boy and girl?" My classmates laughed, but I was serious, and I was horrified. I never got an answer to my question. The next day a kid in my class told me, "My father said you should've said you're Black." I went home and asked my parents why her father would say that. They explained the history of miscegenation and the 'one drop of Black blood' past history.
- When I was 13 our family moved from India to Florida and my parents enrolled me in the neighborhood school. As I prepared to leave for my first day of middle school, my dad took me aside and told me that I may be uncomfortable because of some unpleasant experiences that could occur at this new school. I asked him what he meant, and he told me that some kids may taunt me because of the color of my skin, and that they may even threaten me. That never happened. I found a way to move between different racial and ethnic groups. I did experience a lot of threats after 911, and I had to figure out how to respond to these threats in a way that did not escalate situations. Today, I am a teacher, and I encourage my students to find ways to see beyond differences and I also encourage them to speak up if they do see someone threatened by others, because of race, or religion, or other differences.
- I have a daughter who is half Black. We haven't had any conversations about race yet because she's not even 2, but I have had conversations with her mom about it. I'm very afraid thinking about my daughter growing up in this city and I wonder if we should even

continue raising her here because of the segregation, incarceration rates, and stuff like that. I was also having a conversation with my friend who is Black and has lived all over the world and has a very diverse background, and he said that he had never encountered racism until he moved to Milwaukee. That frightens me. Right now, she's still very young so we haven't had any conversations about it, but we're trying to get ahead of the curve, so we have answers when she has questions, so we can give her information we see fit for her age.

- Growing up my mother would be offended that people didn't realize we (participant and siblings) were adopted. She was bothered that they didn't realize Philippino and Cubans weren't the same race. I remember talking about it after that.
- We did not talk about race at home or in church. We were bussed to a white neighborhood. We had to play near the fence while the White students played in the middle of the playground; White students could eat in the lunch room but the Black students had to eat in the yard. I didn't think of it as a racial issue at that time. My Granddaughter is mixed. I tell her to think about the strawberry, vanilla and chocolate ice cream – she is the strawberry.
- I had lived in Milwaukee in a vibrant south-side neighborhood when I was a toddler and until grade school. Kids and elders were very kind to me when I lived there. Then we moved to a very rural area of the State, where I attended grade school. Here, for the first time, I began hearing some very hateful, racist words, all directed toward me. Other kids used the N word, and even worse. I was startled by the hate words, and I felt afraid. I did not know what to do or say to anyone, so I kept quiet and never told anyone about these experiences

Connected Conversation: *"Driving through Milwaukee, a child says to you, "Why is everyone in this area (black/white/brown/a different color than me)?" Hearing this question, what principle listed in your brochure would you apply in the moment and how?"*

2.1 Ask Questions

- Encourage asking questions with your children and explore their answers: Why? How? Feel? Figure out how to make discussing race appropriate and understandable for a four year old. Be a model.
- Ask children, 'How do you know'? Understand, explore, and erase their assumptions.
- I would ask the child why they asked that question? I would want to know what made them say that. I would chose #4, seeking out programs and organizations where the child could meet people from a variety of backgrounds.

- I would ask a child why they think that way. I would also teach children to ask that question of other children who might say something like this. I would ask open-ended questions, and model a calmness related to various cultural groups. I would read books to and with children, and I would be OK with fumbling my way through these efforts. I would chose #6, modeling appropriate behaviors.
- Kids question me so I should be prepared to talk about it. I think asking them questions is the important part here. Talking about the past and the present. Looking at Chicago and how it's segregated and neighborhood based and how that choice is about comfort about affluence. Explaining the idea of a neighborhood
- I would ask more questions. For example, if it's a low income area, I would ask them "What else do you see in this area?" or "What other clues do you see that might answer your question?" I would discuss redlining, fair housing, and civil rights, so they understand how people are set up to live in certain areas with certain resources.
- I'm a teacher who is black. My students will say things like, "I saw someone who looks exactly like you?" And, I say, "you mean 'black?'"
- I think 'feeling' questions can help, for instance, how do you feel about the
-
- situation this person is in?
- I'm new to Milwaukee so I would try to understand so I'm comfortable. I don't know the history of Milwaukee, so I wouldn't know how to answer that question specifically. I would ask questions to see where the conversation goes and to gain context. I would look around and see what the child sees. For example, are they seeing homeless people who are all one race? People on their way to work or school? What is the context of their question? That would guide my answer.
- I don't know how to ask questions of a 3 1/2 year old given this scenario. I could ask "why do we live where we live?" and try to see the motivation behind his questions.
- Tell me more of what they see
- Bring out observations
- What else do you notice
- Do they notice something about the environment that is not like their own...that is not about skin color
- Mirroring back the the questions to the initiator.
- Questioning from a child and mirroring for clarity buys the adult time to formulate a reply

2.2 Fairness

- Using the past to connect future is important. My son is in kindergarten. He learned about Martin Luther King. He came home and asked, "Can you believe how unfair...? [Can you

believe how unfair conditions were before and during the civil rights era? These are the kinds of questions he began to ask his mother.]”

- The one that jumps out: Unfairness. The economics and lack of fairness.
- The poorer quality education and lack of housing opportunities.
- It's never fair but it happened and we can make changes
- Worries about suggesting the unfairness because it can sound like Oh the poor things, looking down on people. There is strength in their community as well.
- One must look at the difference between 17% of Black students versus 90% of white students being college-bound.
- Conversation about central city kids who, when they go to college are expected to fit into this white society, white culture.
- Our daughter is the only white child in an all black school. We want her to feel that she is in a normal situation, so we do not talk about her being the only one. We use #3 with her, so that she can begin to understand what is fair and what is unfair.
- You should tie in fairness to that too, talk about redlining. How people are not allowed to live in places, historically. Expanding on how diverse our world is and help them get to know others.
- I always told my kids if somethings not fair for everybody it's not fair for anybody. Thinking about teens, as parents we talk about race like we talk about sex, 'You'll figure it out'. Fairness puts everyone on the same playing field. One way we're most likely to explore culture is through art or food. What does go on in this neighborhood? Introduce our kids to that.
- I like the idea of farming it as a question of 'fairness.' If you describe someone else's situation a child will often say, 'well, that isn't fair!'
- Did you know that, in the past, kids could not live where they wanted to live. Based on the color of their skin they would stay in a particular area.

2.3 Model Behavior

- Encourage asking questions with your children and explore their answers: Why? How? Feel? Figure out how to make discussing race appropriate and understandable for a four year old. Be a model.
- I would ask a child why they think that way. I would also teach children to ask that question of other children who might say something like this. I would ask open-ended questions, and model a calmness related to various cultural groups. I would read books to and with children, and I would be OK with fumbling my way through these efforts. I would chose #6, modeling appropriate behaviors.

- My husband and I strive to be aware as parents, and this means that at times we just need to take a deep breath and dive in, not fully knowing what is ahead for us or for our daughter. We strive to model accepting and respectful behavior toward all people, both for our young daughter and in front of family and friends, and even in public places in front of people we may not know, so we choose #6.
- I would do what the brochure says and model the behavior I want to see. I would just tell them “everyone has to live and be and work and play somewhere, and sometimes people like doing that with other people who look like them”. I wouldn’t make a big deal out of it because it shouldn’t be a big deal.

2.4 Connect Past, Present, and Future

- Providing a historical perspective on race in Milwaukee [depending on the child’s age and ability to reason and comprehension.
- You need to know the history, but again how do you talk about it? A good resource is John Lewis’ graphic novel autobiography “March”, which encourages young people to have power and is an easy family read. Race history is the history of fairness. My work is action.
- I have an eight year old and an eleven year old. My daughter asked that [the prompt question]. She has my color [She is bi-racial but looks White in skin color and hair type] and my husband is African-American. She was only seven. She has books, so we’re always reading stories. I explained – trying to connect the past - in the 60s African-American families were shut out of certain neighborhoods. Certain rights to live and work where they wanted to live and work, and this affects how neighborhoods are today.
- I thought of connecting past with present and how everything was set up to be White privilege. I have two bi-racial grandchildren. One looks White and the other Black, except that her hair [the White child] is blond and [textured] like African-American’s hair. People are constantly commenting.
- Using the past to connect future is important. My son is in kindergarten. He learned about Martin Luther King. He came home and asked, “Can you believe how unfair...? [Can you believe how unfair conditions were before and during the civil rights era? These are the kinds of questions he began to ask his mother.]”
- This happened to us. And the child said, Why are all the people getting the meal black? I gave him a history overview of how the housing situation happened, redlining, etc. And said that there's lots of work being done but it's not an easy problem to fix.
- I would ask a child why they think that way. I would also teach children to ask that question of other children who might say something like this. I would ask open-ended questions, and model a calmness related to various cultural groups. I would read books to and with

children, and I would be OK with fumbling my way through these efforts. I would chose #6, modeling appropriate behaviors.

- Kids question me so I should be prepared to talk about it. I think asking them questions is the important part here. Talking about the past and the present. Looking at Chicago and how it's segregated and neighborhood based and how that choice is about comfort about affluence. Explaining the idea of a neighborhood
- I always told my kids if somethings not fair for everybody it's not fair for anybody. Thinking about teens, as parents we talk about race like we talk about sex, 'You'll figure it out'. Fairness puts everyone on the same playing field. One way we're most likely to explore culture is through art or food. What does go on in this neighborhood? Introduce our kids to that.

2.5 Empower

- Instructing my children to be "Part of The Change" opportunities to start THE PEACE.
- It's a good thing that your driving through other parts of the city, rather than around. My children have had these experiences and they never ask about race, but about the houses. A good resource I began is 'Toddlers and Kids on a Mission' which encourages children to engage with their ENTIRE community.
- I head Toddlers and Kids on a Mission. Fairness is the issue. At St. Vincent's all the white kids are at one table and all the black kids at another.
- Improving of services in all neighborhoods is required.
- I would ask the child why they asked that question? I would want to know what made them say that. I would chose #4, seeking out programs and organizations where the child could meet people from a variety of backgrounds.

2.6 Talk about Race

- #1: allowing the initial conversation to be the start of an "Ongoing Lifetime Conversation"
- I think that it is important to talk about issues with teens and help them make connections with a variety of people. It was for this reason that I began attending gatherings like this several years ago so that I could learn more about race, racial distinctions, racism, racial inequality, and racial justice and help others understand these distinctions, too. I have also been working with others through some community organizations to help reduce racial injustice and to work for racial justice. I guess I have chosen #1, #4 and #7.
- It's about being comfortable talking about racism. I don't want to be biased colorblind, people don't see the institutional racism, the implicit bias. Black boys get detention far more than their white counterparts. We need to address it now, we need to fix it with our kids so they're empowered to stand up when they see it happening. They have to understand it to dismantle it. This is about "So what are we going to do about it?"

2.7 Exposure

- I am not from around here, and have lived in a northern suburb of Milwaukee for eight years. My black children are shocked when they drive through Milwaukee. Race is always a conversation in my house. It's unfortunate that the only way to be successful is to get out, and thus my kids lack knowledge of 'real' life.
- Talk about the blue eye- brown eye experiment and how useful that is to consider.
- Stories of child segregating own family by eye color, hair color, etc.
- I feel just the opposite – I want my child to see and appreciate contributions and richness of people of different backgrounds
- It's a good thing that your driving through other parts of the city, rather than around. My children have had these experiences and they never ask about race, but about the houses. A good resource I began is 'Toddlers and Kids on a Mission' which encourages children to engage with their ENTIRE community.
- As a teacher, I strive to help students develop critical thinking skills so that they assess experiences and situations and make thoughtful decisions. I choose #7.
- My husband is Japanese American; both of his parents lived in internment camps during WWII when they were little. We teach our daughter, who is biracial, about this history, and I remind her that today, all people can choose where they live, but only if we stay vigilant. I choose #1 and #4 and #5. I also try to model accepting behavior with others, both at home and at work, so I would also choose #6.

2.8 No Discussion or Unsure

- I'm chomping at the bit ready to have these conversations with my son. I struggle with how to get into that conversation with him because he lives in a little bubble. I try to bring home books with all kinds of people [depicted in them].
- It's a natural tendency to be around people who look like you. People do make choices about where they live as well.
- I talk with diehard racists and feel I make no difference. Other woman says maybe you don't know what they might think about later.
- I don't think I've learned enough about these approaches to answer this question. I personally don't find the pamphlets beneficial. I grew up in New York and was around all black kids, I was the minority. I don't get why we have to have these deep talks about race. My kid says "I met a black person today" So what? I didn't learn these things growing up, I didn't feel this way. I live in Glendale and it's a highly mixed area. I don't want to point out these differences to my kids. My wife hates all the things I'm saying.
- I want to think my child will go through life not noticing race because we are color blind
- My fear is that, if my son notices race, it means he's racist – but he's 6 years old

- I was working with kids in parks and knocked on doors asking if people were interested in improving the neighborhood. A friend told me to stop labeling some neighborhoods as good and others bad – all neighborhoods have people who care and that makes them all good.
- I don't know how to address this scenario without thinking that this is a quagmire that if I address it will only feed the stereotypes inherent in the scenario itself.

Parting Pledge: *In order to practice having these discussions with children in your personal life, what's one action step you could pledge today? (Feel free to brainstorm with your small group if they're stuck. Write your pledge on a post-it note and on your brochure)*

3.1 Conversations

- Initiate
- Speak
- Converse
- Acknowledge my children are brown & awesome, ask questions, and help identify a hero of color for my children.
- Use provided guidelines, engage in open and honest conversations with my son.
- I need to have these conversations. I need to get more comfortable having them with my children.
- Remember that all children don't know their lineage – for a variety of reasons. My children were conceived through a sperm donor. I don't know all about their lineage to share it with them.
- I will try to let others see that we can't really know one another unless we have contact and conversation.
- I will be open and give the child time to say what they want to say, acknowledging how important the topic is. If I am doing something I will ask her to let me finish so I can devote the time to listen
- I will continue to be open to these conversations because I am on a journey

3.2 Introduce Different Cultures

- Have you seen the "Because of Them We Can" photo series?
- "All the Colors We Are" is another one I like to share with my 7th grader.
- I'll buy multi-racial books for my grandchild
- I'll take my family to restaurants or local stores in Harambee
- I'll bring pictures of people of color into my home and talk about them on a regular basis
- I will work harder at my school to emphasize the need for diversity.
- I intend to have my family attend events that are more multi-cultural
- I will drive my kids around some other neighborhoods
- I will involve my son in areas outside of our community

3.3 Educate

- Remember
- To educate my son and be proactive, for every child and adult
- Educate myself, bring in more culture of color into my family and house.
- I will find age appropriate books and articles to read to a child so we can have a further conversation
- I will find a book about a White child going into a multi-color neighborhood
- I will infuse history – years ago some thought people who look one way should live here and people who look different should live there – as a way to get them to start thinking critically
- I will tell kids about 200 Days of Marches (depending upon their age)
- There was a Sesame Street episode all about skin. I will track it down and show it to my daughters.

3.4 Ask Questions

- Acknowledge my children are brown & awesome, ask questions, and help identify a hero of color for my children.
- Ask more probing questions without fear of judgement, try to understand my children's thought process.
- I'll keep questioning and thinking. And have a coffee date with presenters of a race program I attended.

3.5 Address Racism

- Acknowledge and call out racism, encourage youth to lead and take power.
- As a teacher, I stop racism and racist comments in the classroom and with my own children. When I hear it I stop what we are doing and address it. If I let it continue I let it perpetuate, so I have to do my part to stop it. I also need to have a conversation with my own children about racism.
- I will become more aware of my own behavior and willingness to intervene when a conversation is uncomfortable.
- At my job, I will be careful to see how we overlook certain people and gravitate to patterns that are exclusive.

3.6 Participate in Community

- To start a book drive to saturate community on culture of color.
- Love
- Help
- I'll buy and donate multi-racial/cultural books to a childcare place