

nickelodeon™



the conscious kid

TALK AND TAKE ACTION:

**PARENTS' &
CAREGIVERS'
GUIDE TO
DISMANTLING
ANTI-BLACKNESS**

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Nickelodeon's Talk and Take Action: Parents' & Caregivers' Guide to Dismantling Anti-Blackness

Anti-Blackness refers to personal, cultural, social, legal, and structural attacks on Black people. This term highlights the unique and disproportionate amount of racism that Black people face. This experience is unique because colorism (the unfair treatment of people based on skin color that benefits lighter skin), white supremacy, and systemic racism work together, specifically to marginalize Black people.

Anti-Blackness can take many forms — hurtful and untrue words and comments, bullying, physical aggression, or being over-disciplined at school. This can be traumatizing for young people and adults, and is an unkind, upsetting, and scary thing for someone to experience. There is a long history of targeted discrimination against the Black community, which continues today in the United States and globally. It results in unfair and inequitable access to education, health care, money, food, housing, and jobs.

This guide, focused on dismantling anti-Blackness, has been written in partnership with The Conscious Kid, an education organization that supports families and educators in taking action to disrupt racism. It is designed to provide parents and caregivers with the tools, tips, and language needed to talk with their children about racism directed at the Black community in the United States.

We recognize having conversations focused on racism and hate can be challenging at any age. We hope this guide will help parents and caregivers feel supported as they navigate these tough topics with their kids.

Finally, we want our families to leave these conversations empowered to make change. This guide provides simple, but significant, action steps families can take together to create a more inclusive world.

TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT ANTI-BLACKNESS: BEFORE YOU BEGIN

When preparing to talk about difficult or potentially triggering topics with children, it is important to frame discussions in ways that will maximize their opportunities to learn, while at the same time, ensuring they won't leave the conversation confused, afraid, or traumatized. These guides include descriptions of racism, discrimination, and violence, which can be challenging for all of us to read and talk about. Here are tips you can use to support conversations with kids about tough topics.

1. Check in with yourself first. Take stock of your own feelings and perceptions related to the information included in these guides. Be aware of emotions that you may have when talking about these topics and acknowledge your own biases. If your family has been personally impacted by racism, discrimination, or hate, it may be difficult to revisit those painful experiences. Consider sharing your thoughts with another trusted adult before engaging with your own children.

2. Review the guides. Being here, reading this, means you care and your willingness to learn the skills needed to hold these conversations with your kids sends a powerful message. These topics are challenging and you may need help navigating them. If that's the case, take time to look through the Talk and Take Action Guides. Each guide will provide you with an introduction to its topic, a historical and contemporary context for why these conversations need to take place, and how you, as a family, can take action. Focus on the information that you feel is most meaningful and relevant to your conversation's focus.

3. Lay the foundation. Before diving into tough topics like racism, discrimination, hate, and bias, it's important to lay the foundation for a safe and secure dialogue. Begin by letting kids know what you'd like to talk about and make sure they know no question is off limits. Speak calmly, clearly and use reassuring words and gestures. It might also be helpful to have general, more informal conversations about fairness and equality before approaching these topics. Talk with your child about your family values, how you cultivate kindness, and what you admire about those who are caring, compassionate, and equitable.

4. Prepare to be transparent. Talking honestly and openly about difficult topics with children models positive behaviors that fosters open lines of communications, builds trust, and strengthens bonds. Let kids know that these kinds of conversations are difficult, even for adults. Acknowledging this difficulty tells kids that even though a topic may be uncomfortable, it is important to talk about. As you are tackling tough topics at home, you shouldn't attempt or expect to cover everything in a single conversation. These kinds of conversations will be ongoing. Aim to keep them age appropriate and accessible.



5. Gauge what they know. Kids gain information implicitly, or informally, through what they see, hear, and experience. Asking students what they already know about a topic is a great starting point for conversation. Expand on what they bring up to deepen their understanding and fill in their knowledge gaps. Children often notice and absorb much more than we expect.

6. Lean in and listen. In a world full of distractions, now is the time to give children your undivided attention. Encourage them to ask questions, and let them know you'll do your best to answer them. Pay attention to the questions they ask and any emotional responses that may be evoked by the information being presented. This means not only listening to their words, but looking at their body language for cues about how they are feeling. When your child shows signs they are feeling uneasy, sad, or scared, reassure them that they are safe and cared for.

7. Learn with them. Answer children's questions as clearly and honestly as you can, using kid-friendly language and definitions. Don't feel obligated to answer right away. Slow down, take a pause, and repeat the question. This ensures that you don't answer right away just for the sake of answering and providing information that is incorrect. And, if you don't know the answer to a question, that's OK! Saying "I don't know" creates an opportunity for you to learn together. If you are caught off guard by a difficult question and are unsure of how to respond in the moment, try one of these:

- *"That's a really big question! Let's explore it together."*
- *"That's a great question. Let's find out more together."*

8. Consider and validate their feelings. *"It's not right that people are being mean to Black people!"* Validate their feelings and explain that being upset about this means this is something important that we need to pay attention to. Allowing them to express how they feel lets them know that it's OK to feel emotions such as sadness or anger. Some children may be more likely to suppress their emotions due to learned gender, social, or cultural roles.

9. Help them frame the situation. Providing kids with context is useful when helping them make sense of acts of racism, hate, or violence. If they ask why someone would direct hate at someone based on their race, you could say, "Some people wrongly believe that some ethnic groups are better than others. Without the correct information, they sometimes commit acts of violence against other people and think it's OK based on that belief."

10. Empower them to make a difference. Tackling tough topics can sometimes leave us feeling sad, angry, or hopeless. While these feelings are valid, we can use them to engage in meaningful actions to fight hate and discrimination. For example, showing support for others or volunteering time to a cause can make a big difference. If you need support, each guide includes a list of actions you, as a family, can take to leave the conversation feeling empowered and prepared to build a more just and compassionate world.



ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACKNESS AND ITS ROOT CAUSE

Anti-Blackness

The personal, cultural, social, legal, and structural attacks on Black people. This term highlights the unique and disproportionate amount of racism that Black people face.

Bias

A tendency to lean in a certain direction, either in favor of or against a particular thing or group of people. Some people might be biased against a certain race, ethnicity, culture, or religion because they have been told negative things about that group.

Chattel Slavery

The system of enslaving Black people and treating them as property.

Colorism

Discrimination, or unfair treatment, based on skin color. Colorism often disadvantages dark-skinned people while privileging those with lighter skin. All communities, including communities of color, can be influenced by colorism.

Discrimination

Unfair treatment of one person or group of people because of the person or group's identity, like their race, gender, ability, religion, or culture. Discrimination is an action that can come from prejudice.

Microaggressions

Everyday happenings that are insults against people from marginalized groups, including people of color. (e.g., "You don't sound Black," and "Wow, you're so well-spoken for a Black person.")

Racism

The belief that one race is better than another – and having the power to create systems (e.g., educational system, legal system, etc.) that support that belief.

Stereotypes

A widely held and oversimplified idea about a type of person or group. Racial, religious and cultural stereotypes are harmful, shape interactions between people, impact policy, and are often believed to be true even when they are false.

White Supremacy

The norms, laws, treatment, power, access, and opportunities that benefit white people and/or Western cultural practices at the expense of people of color and marginalized communities. It is rooted in the false belief that white people and dominant Western cultural norms are superior.



You may have seen on the news or heard talk about harmful acts targeted at Black people, or all the many ways people across the country and world have been speaking out about [anti-Blackness](#).

Anti-Blackness is not new. In the United States, it is rooted in an over 400-year history of anti-Black [racism](#) and [white supremacy](#). Much of that mistreatment is based on Black people wrongly being seen as inferior, or less than, other people. This idea was created and used to justify slavery, or forced labor. [Chattel slavery](#), the system of enslaving Black people and treating them as property, was legal in the United States for hundreds of years.

Various Black Communities in the United States It's important to understand that the terms Black and African American don't always mean the same thing. The term Black can be used to refer to the collective, or shared, identity and experiences of race and racism among Black people globally. There are many diverse communities within the larger Black community, like Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean, African American, and many other ethnicities and cultures. The term African American often refers to the descendants of Africans who were enslaved or born in America. Not all Black people in America identify as African American and some people identify as being part of multiple communities within the larger Black community.

Throughout history, and even today, the U.S. government has implemented many laws and policies that have limited Black people from having equal access to rights and freedoms like owning land, housing, voting, and education. Black people have also been kept from high-paying jobs, living in certain neighborhoods, and even becoming citizens. Even though slavery was officially ended, or was abolished, in 1865, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made different types of [discrimination](#) illegal, unequal laws and individual [bias](#) continue to harm the Black community and contribute to the racism seen today. For the last 400+ years, members of the Black community have been standing up to the inequities and unfair treatment they have experienced. Learn more about this history below.



ANTI-BLACKNESS TODAY AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO TAKE ACTION

Bystander

A person who is present at an event or who knows about it happening without participating in it.

Colorism

Discrimination based on skin color. Colorism often disadvantages dark-skinned people while privileging those with lighter skin. All communities, including communities of color, can be influenced by colorism.

Cultural Appropriation

When someone takes a marginalized or targeted community's cultural expressions, ideas, history, or practices without permission and claims it as their own to further personal interests. It often doesn't respect the original meaning or history, give credit to their source, and can reinforce stereotypes.

Solidarity

Being an Upstander by expressing support, standing up for, and helping a group of people being mistreated or discriminated against.

Upstander

A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.

In the United States and globally, anti-Blackness is still present in many ways. We see it in our school systems, where Black students are disciplined more often and more seriously for the same behavior as their white classmates, or where Black history and contributions are not taught or celebrated in school. It can be seen in our healthcare system where Black people do not have the same access

to quality care and are often treated differently by doctors and other medical professionals because of biases. It is in our job system where Black people, and Black women in particular, are paid less than non-Black people for doing the same work. We also see it in our prison system where Black people receive longer sentences than non-Black people for the same crimes, or offenses. Culturally, we see it in [colorism](#), where Black people are seen as less beautiful for having darker skin and those with lighter skin receive unearned privileges.

Annual hate crime data shows Black people are the most attacked racial group in the United States.

In 2020, attacks against Black people increased by 40% from 2019.

Anti-Blackness can also happen in our everyday interactions. We see it in how people make some friends and leave out others, in books and media that show untrue [stereotypes](#), and in small behaviors, actions, and comments called [microaggressions](#).



Research shows that anti-Blackness and experiences with racism start at a young age, with many Black children reporting they often face racial discrimination. A 2018 study found that preschool children of different races and ethnicities already have negative biases against Black children. In another study done in 2020, 101 Black middle and high school students encountered more than 5,600 instances of racism in just two weeks. Students experienced racial discrimination online, offline, and through teasing and they saw their peers face similar situations. On average, each Black kid reported experiencing racial discrimination over five times per day.

Experiencing discrimination can take a toll on someone's mental and physical health, cause sleep issues, stress, and depression, and can lead to low self-esteem, self-doubt, lack of self-confidence, and the false belief that racist ideas and stereotypes are true. Kids and adults alike can show these symptoms when exposed to racism. Even witnessing racism against someone else, whether toward peers or family members, or on the news, can be just as harmful and hurtful as personally experiencing it.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected, or overlapping, nature of people's identities such as their race, sexuality, and gender. We all identify with and belong to multiple communities. These identities combine to create our unique experiences with power, privilege, and discrimination. For example, a Black woman may not only face discrimination because of her racial identity, she may also experience it because of her gender.

Anti-Blackness does not only impact Black people. Non-Black people, such as those of South Asian descent, who have characteristics such as darker skin or features perceived as Black, can experience racism because they are associated with Blackness. The existing bias toward European-centric, or white, characteristics, appearance, and behaviors, is present in our society across all of our racial communities and across all our institutions, negatively impacts all of us and can also be internalized by Black people. It is important for everybody to speak out against anti-Blackness because it is harmful to all communities.

Anti-Blackness divides people by focusing on their differences and can make people feel they are better than others. It can also distort, or warp, the way we see and connect with each other, and it can ultimately impact our ability to experience diverse and meaningful friendships. Individuals' biases against Black people and lack of racial awareness can limit our ability to understand why someone is hurt, how we may have caused harm, and what we can do to help.

All people deserve to be seen and heard, and feel safe and connected with others, regardless of their skin color. That's why it's important to learn about and understand all the ways anti-Blackness shows up and does harm. Then, we can use our knowledge to take action to disrupt it. Learning about stereotypes, [cultural appropriation](#), microaggressions, colorism, and how we can show [solidarity](#) and take action are all important steps toward countering anti-Blackness.



HISTORY OF ACTIVISM AGAINST ANTI-BLACKNESS

Activism

The actions people take to change policies, laws, or rules that are unfair or unjust.

It is important to understand that Black history doesn't begin with slavery. Black history is global and reaches beyond the United States and West and Central Africa. It includes rich, complex, and varied experiences that date back to the very beginning of human life. Black history is filled with moments of strength, persistence, hardship, and joy.

People engage in activism when they want to bring about political or social change. There is a long and powerful history of [activism](#) against anti-Blackness in the United States and around the world. Below are just a few of the many examples of resilience and activism against anti-Blackness in the United States.



1865: Juneteenth

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863, but it wasn't until June 19, 1865, that all enslaved people were freed. This day became known as "Juneteenth," which is remembered and celebrated today.



1500s to 1800s: The Global African Diaspora, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the Underground Railroad

The African Diaspora most commonly refers to the descendants of West and Central Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries. The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes established by Black, white, and Indigenous people to shelter and help Black people escaping enslavement in the United States. Well-known activists who resisted and spoke out against the enslavement of Black people during this time included Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass.



1915 to 1926: "Negro History Week"

Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History launched "Negro History Week" to support schools in promoting greater knowledge of Black history. Colleges and universities across the United States extended Negro History Week to a full month. It is now called Black History Month.



1954 to 1968: The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement was a struggle for justice and equal rights for Black Americans. It sparked a global awareness about the unfair treatment of Black people. Outcomes of the Civil Rights Movement include the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* court ruling, which made school segregation illegal and the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin.

1911: *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Du Bois

W.E.B. Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk*, one of the earliest texts to outline the consequences of racism, its damaging effects on the lives of Black people, and how the idea of race was invented by humans — not based on biology.



1918 to 1937: The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual and cultural movement and revival of Black music, dance, art, fashion, literature, theater, and politics in the United States.



1960: Ruby Bridges

Six-year-old Ruby Bridges became the first Black student to attend an all-white school in the South. Although segregation was illegal in public schools, many Southern states didn't follow or agree with the law. Angry crowds tried to stop her, but when Ruby bravely walked into the school building she sparked the beginning of integration, where Black and white students had the right to attend public schools together across the United States.



1961: The Freedom Rides

Hundreds of Black and white student activists, called Freedom Riders, rode buses together throughout the South to challenge laws segregating buses and bus terminals. Although the Freedom Riders faced attacks and violence, they continued in their protests, drawing national attention to their cause.



1983: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

After 15 years of resistance from members of Congress who didn't support honoring Dr. King's many contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr. Day was signed into law, becoming the first federal holiday to recognize a Black citizen.

2008: Barack Obama

Barack Obama was elected as the first Black President of the United States.



2020: George Floyd/ Black Lives Matter Protests

After the death of George Floyd, protests against anti-Black racism and police brutality started a movement that spread to over 2,000 cities in over 60 countries, and on all seven continents. It was the largest movement in U.S. history to date.

1968: Shirley Chisholm

When she was elected to the House of Representatives, Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman in Congress.

1997: The Million Woman March

The Million Woman March was the first large-scale national march that focused on the issues and experiences of Black women.

2013: #BlackLivesMatter

Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza started #BlackLivesMatter to support and promote the rights of Black people and actively respond to systemic racism.

2020: Kamala Harris

In the 2020 Presidential election, Kamala Harris was elected as the first Black, South Asian American woman Vice President of the United States.



FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

In every example of activism listed here, there was a person, or a group of people, who knew something wasn't right. Some included Black people working together to create change and some included people of all races working in solidarity with the Black community to change laws, policies, and systems. To speak up against the unfairness they heard, saw, or experienced, they had to stand up to others who did not support or share their views.

- What qualities do you think they needed to stand up for what they believed in?
- How do you think they felt?
- Why might a community need an activist?
- Why do you think activism is an important part of making change?
- What problems do you see at school or in our community that need activists?
- How would you like to contribute to solving those problems?
Who can you enlist to help you?
- Did you know about this history of activism?
What other Black activists do you know who are not listed here?

TAKING ACTION! DISCUSSION GUIDES

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

What are stereotypes and how can I identify them?

Stereotypes are widely held and oversimplified ideas about a type of person or group. They are harmful because they erase differences within and across communities, shape interactions between people, and are often believed to be true even when they are false.

Stereotypes are harmful to Black people in multiple ways. They can negatively affect the way a community is seen and ultimately treated in society or even at school. They can impact who gets bullied, who is viewed as intelligent, who gets included or not included in friend groups, who gets disciplined by the teacher more often, and who is spoken about negatively more often.

These stereotypes seep into our everyday thinking and create automatic or unconscious thoughts or biases for — or against — groups of people. When left unchecked, these unconscious biases can lead us to prejudge a person just because they belong to a particular group, culture, or religion. These prejudgments can influence the decisions we make about a person or group without even knowing them and impact our behavior. The actions that we take based on these biases and prejudgments can lead to acts of discrimination. This is a cycle that begins with a simple stereotype.



TAKING ACTION: STOPPING ANTI-BLACK STEREOTYPES

There is no single Black experience. Understanding the diverse experiences and differences between Black people in the larger Black community is key to stopping stereotypes.

We can also change how (or how much) anti-Black stereotypes influence us by watching shows, reading books, and seeking out stories written by Black authors where Black people are shown having many different kinds of experiences and play non-stereotypical roles, such as being doctors, writers, scholars, and scientists.

Here are some ways students and teachers can help stop this cycle:

- Listen for stereotypes in your conversations with others. Speak up if you hear them, even if they are in the form of jokes or teasing, which can still be really hurtful. Try saying phrases like: "That's actually not true," "That comment is hurtful," "Not all Black people are the same," or "Blackness can be many things at once."
- Look for and call out stereotypes in books, shows, and media.
- Be aware of and ask yourself where your ideas about other people come from. Notice when you make assumptions about people based on stereotypes.
- Get to know people before making judgments about them.

CAREGIVER REFLECTION

Parents and caregivers, be aware that you are constantly modeling behaviors for your children — your actions can serve as a powerful tool to combat bias. As you move forward, ask yourself:

- What authors do we have in our bookshelves? What movies do we watch? What types of music do we listen to? Is there opportunity to expand to showcase artists of different cultures and ethnicities?
- What anti-Black stereotypes do we see most often in books, movies, and conversation?
 - How can I intentionally identify them and combat them with my kids?
- How can I actively introduce my child to positive and counter-stereotypical examples of Blackness?
 - Are there any events showcasing Black artists or Black history that I can take my kids to? What about restaurants, museums, concerts, or other community events?
 - How can I support or show solidarity with Black people in my local community and beyond? How can I get involved with or support Black businesses and organizations?



FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Have you ever had a judgmental thought or idea about someone?
How did that thought change after getting to know them?
- Can you think of a moment where you witnessed or had an experience with a stereotype?
How did it make you feel?
- How do you think stereotypes impact how you see people?
Do you think it is harmful or hurtful to be thought of this way? Why or Why not?

REVIEW, REFLECT, AND REIMAGINE:

FAMILY REFLECTION

What would you say if you heard someone say something broad and untrue about a person or community? Together, practice what you could say to speak out against stereotypes.



APPRECIATING, NOT APPROPRIATING

Cultural appropriation is when someone takes a marginalized community's cultural expressions, ideas, art, history, or practices without permission and claims them as their own to further personal interests. It often doesn't respect the original meaning or history, compensate or give credit to their source. Cultural appropriation can also reinforce stereotypes. Remember, one person doesn't speak for an entire community, so this permission usually requires permission from multiple stakeholders in that community.

There are many ways Black culture is appropriated, both in daily life and in what we see in the media. Here are just a few examples of how this occurs:

- Taking and benefiting from Black knowledge, contributions, and cultural practices (dances, appearance, fashion, music, language, products, stories, art, etc.) without permission, credit, or compensation, like when Jalaiah Harmon was not credited for creating the viral TikTok "Renegade" dance.
- Speaking in African American Vernacular English (AAVE), trying on a "Blaccent," or using Black slang.
- Using Black skin color emojis or GIFs of Black people, especially to express exaggerated, or overdone, emotions that reinforce stereotypes of Black people.
- Wearing Black hairstyles such as cornrows, box braids, or locs.
- Wearing Blackface, which is the practice of darkening one's skin, usually with black paint, to mock and act as a caricature (exaggerated representation) of a Black person.
- Blackfishing, which is pretending to be or altering your appearance to look Black or part Black. This often involves taking Black characteristics for one's own benefit, or interest, while actual Black people experience discrimination for these same characteristics. The term stems from the words "Blackface" and "catfishing," pretending to be someone you are not, especially online.

These examples and other versions of cultural appropriation harm the Black community. When non-Black groups pick and choose different aspects of Blackness to take or copy, they do not have to deal with the same consequences that Black people have to face when they express themselves the same way. (For example, wearing Black hairstyles that Black kids get stereotyped, discriminated against, or suspended for wearing.) Many times cultural appropriation involves taking and benefitting from Black people or culture while reinforcing or ignoring the racism Black people experience. Lastly, it takes away resources, money, and opportunities. All forms of cultural appropriation contribute to stereotypes and the mistreatment of Black people.



TAKING ACTION: APPRECIATING BLACK CULTURE

There are many ways to appreciate and not appropriate Black culture. Here are some ways families can show support:

- Be thoughtful about the latest trends. Explore and learn the roots of your favorite music styles, fashion choices, dances, and other art forms.
- As a family, support and shop at Black businesses.
- Credit Black people for their knowledge, time, and work.
- Read books by Black authors together.
- Watch TV shows and movies by Black creators.
- Speak out against racism, stereotypes, and anti-Blackness.

CAREGIVER REFLECTION

Parents and caregivers, follow Black thought leaders on social media, including Black-led media platforms and Black-led organizations.

- What do you think you can learn from following people who have different perspectives and experiences from yourself?
- How do you think these kinds of additions to your social media feed will influence your understanding of issues impacting the Black community?

Sometimes it is difficult to decide if something is cultural appropriation or cultural appreciation. When in doubt, consider these questions:

- Are you taking aspects of Black culture without knowing its history or meaning?
- Are there any stereotypes involved in what you are doing?
- When a Black person does this, do they face racism or discrimination for it?
- Are you crediting the source of what you are doing?
- Are you taking opportunities and resources away from Black creators?

If you answered yes to any or all of the above, it would be considered cultural appropriation and you should reevaluate your actions. People appreciate culture when they do it mindfully and with permission, learning from and respecting the community.



REVIEW, REFLECT, AND REIMAGINE

FAMILY REFLECTION

Spend some time exploring [Nickelodeon's Little Lens](#) series as a family. Each short video features Black kids sharing what makes them and their families special. Hear about their family heroes, their favorite hairstyles, how they express themselves, and what their names mean to them. Learning about the everyday experiences of Black families builds an understanding and appreciation of Black culture and the diversity within the Black community. When we hear each others' stories, we can start to appreciate our common hopes and dreams, and our shared humanity.

COUNTERING COLORISM

What is colorism?

Colorism is the discrimination or unfair treatment of a person or group based on skin color. Colorism often disadvantages darker-skinned people while privileging, or giving an advantage to, those with lighter skin. All communities, including communities of color, can be influenced by colorism.

The lack of representation of darker-skinned people in magazines and movies, and on TV shows, is proof that colorism exists today. When darker-skinned individuals do appear, they are often cast as the "bad person" or villain. When looking in the makeup section at a store, there tends to be many lighter shades available to choose from, while there are few, if any, for darker-skinned people. It's our differences that make us special, beautiful, and unique. People should be represented and feel welcome and supported no matter their skin color.

Colorism has a harmful impact and can lead to:

- Low self-esteem, negative body image, depression, and lack of confidence.
- Unfair and limited ideas of who is beautiful, capable or smart.
- Not being valued or seen as important to peers or educators.
- Not being included, or being excluded, in different friend groups.
- Being treated less favorably than lighter-skinned students.
- Not getting equal access to resources or opportunities like extra support in school, job offers, etc.



TAKING ACTION: COUNTERING COLORISM

Here are some things we can do to be more aware of and counter colorism:

- Speak up if you hear or see someone being joked about or teased for their skin color. Some possible responses could be: "That comment wasn't OK," "I don't think that's funny," or "I think you're making a judgment about skin color that is not right."
- Listen to those who experience colorism and take it seriously if they say they've been harmed or treated unfairly.
- Include students of all skin colors to play in your friend groups or eat together at school. Speak up if you see someone being excluded for having darker skin.
- Reflect on how you feel about your own skin color, any biases or thoughts you may have about it, and why you may feel that way.
- Be mindful of how you talk about skin color and do not make negative comments about your own or anyone else's skin color.
- Watch TV shows and movies with positive representation of all skin tones, including darker skin tones. Notice how often you see white or light-skinned main characters or leads on TV compared to how often you see darker-skinned leads.
- Read books that affirm, or support, Black kids and kids with darker skin tones.
- Commit to continue learning about colorism and how to combat it.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Have you ever witnessed, experienced, or heard about an incident of colorism? If so, describe what happened and how it made you feel.
- Have you ever made a judgment about someone based on their skin tone? Did your judgment make you treat or view that person differently? How would you feel if someone judged you without getting to know you?
- Why do you think it is important to see all skin colors as beautiful?
- Can you think of anything that you can do to make sure you are celebrating all skin tones?



REVIEW, REFLECT, AND REIMAGINE

FAMILY REFLECTION

People are treated unfairly because of racism and anti-Blackness, but we can make a change. It is possible to create a community where people are appreciated and celebrated no matter who they are and what they look like. Kids at Nickelodeon have been talking about their vision of the future and how they hope to make the world more equitable, fair, and kind. One kid's vision is self-love no matter the color of our skin. See and listen to her vision [here](#).

Use this [worksheet](#) to create a vision board with words and pictures that speak to a future where everyone feels appreciated and celebrated. What do you think needs to happen to get there?



SPEAKING OUT AGAINST MICROAGGRESSIONS

What are microaggressions?

Microaggressions are everyday behaviors or comments that are insults to people from marginalized groups, like Black people, women, or the LGBTQ+ community. For example, “Wow, you speak so clearly for a Black person,” is a microaggression. This example suggests that the person who made the comment assumed that this Black person would not be well-spoken — or competent — and was surprised that they were.

Additional examples of microaggressions might include hurtful comments about skin color, touching a person’s hair without permission, or joking about the way a person speaks.

Sometimes you may unintentionally say a microaggression. It is important to remember that even if you didn’t do this on purpose or intend to hurt someone, the impact, or effect, of your comments still matters. Regardless of whether or not the microaggression was done intentionally, they cause a lot of pain, especially when they keep occurring over time.

Think about it: If someone accidentally steps on your foot, their intention was not to hurt you, but the impact still hurts! It is the same with microaggressions.

If someone accidentally uses a microaggression against you, here are some tips for responding:

Do: Decide if you feel safe to have a conversation with them about what they said.

Don’t: Feel like you have to respond in the moment. Sometimes you may be too upset or not even realize what happened until after it happens. You can always come back and respond if/when you are ready.

Do: Know that you can reach out to a trusted grown-up and tell them about what happened and how you feel.

Reflect on how you feel about your own skin color, any biases or thoughts you may have about it, and why you may feel that way.

If you accidentally used a microaggression, here are some things to think about:

Do: Take responsibility. Apologize for hurting them, take their feelings and comments seriously, and learn from it. Take action to not repeat these mistakes

Don’t: Think your good intention means you are immediately forgiven or tell them how they should be feeling.



FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Can you think of a time you saw or experienced a microaggression? How did it make you feel? Practice what you could say to speak out against microaggressions.
- Have you ever said something that was untrue or hurtful to another person? How did you fix the situation? What steps will you take next time?

TAKING ACTION: SPEAKING OUT AGAINST MICROAGGRESSIONS

It is important to speak out against stereotypes and microaggressions. It can be hard at first, but with practice, it will become more comfortable. When you hear something about a person that doesn't sound or feel right, trust your instinct.

Here are some phrases you can use to help you speak up:

1. It made me feel uncomfortable when you said that. That isn't true.
2. That didn't sit right with me. That's not OK.
3. That doesn't sound fair. It didn't feel good to hear you say that.
4. Even if you don't mean it, that was really hurtful.

MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS

Imagine you invite a new friend over to your house. You greet them with a big smile and welcome them. How do you think the friend feels? Pretty happy, right? This is called a micro-affirmation.

Micro-affirmations are small but meaningful gestures of caring and kindness that help others succeed, and feel included and cared for. Micro-affirmations are contagious, meaning they spread — the more people use them, the better everyone feels!

Three Guidelines for Micro-Affirmations

- 1. Be on the Lookout!** When you're actively thinking about ways to help people succeed and trying to see others' achievements and skills, you'll be more likely to find them.
- 2. Keep it Small!** You don't need to be a superhero all the time. The smaller and simpler you keep your micro-affirmations, the more likely you'll be to use them.
- 3. Don't Wait!** Think about when your affirmation will be most effective. It's best to give positive feedback as soon as you can.



How You Can Use Micro-Affirmations:

- Acknowledge someone through a greeting, a nod, or a smile.
- Send a short note of encouragement.
- Use words of praise and support like “You’ve got this!” or “I know you can do it!”
- Share positive feedback about someone with others.
- “_____ was really helpful yesterday!”
- Take time to show interest in and get to know someone new.
- Introduce someone by sharing with others what they’re really good at or what you really like about them. For example, “This is my friend _____. She is really great at drawing!”

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How do you feel when someone encourages you, compliments you, or shows interest in your hobbies?
- Can you think about ways and times you can use micro-affirmations?
- What are two micro-affirmations you can start using today with your family and friends?

REVIEW, REFLECT, AND REIMAGINE

FAMILY REFLECTION JOURNAL

Make a list of things you appreciate or like about a family member, friend, or neighbor and share it with them. Have them do the same!



SHOWING SOLIDARITY

Solidarity is about expressing support and taking action against those being treated unfairly. It means taking on racial justice issues as your own and listening to those experiencing injustice. When we fail to speak up and act against anti-Blackness, we play a role in allowing racism and harm to continue.

Here is a list of small ways all students can show solidarity with the Black community:

- Speak up or find a teacher if you witness racism, anti-Blackness, or colorism at school or in your community.
- Learn the history and contributions of Black people in the United States and globally, and understand how racism has impacted the Black community, both historically and currently.
- Explore books, movies, and music created by Black authors and artists.
- Understand what microaggressions are and how to avoid them. Practice what you would say if you saw a friend experience a microaggression, or if someone told you what you said was a microaggression.
- Don't engage in racial teasing, bullying, or joking about Black people, online or in person.
- Support Black creators and media.
- Listen and learn from Black people and perspectives.
- Believe Black people when they say something is discriminatory or hurtful.
- Ask for content on Black history, experiences, and contributions in school curriculum.
- Recognize and call out anti-Black stereotypes in TV shows, books, and movies.
- Make a commitment to learn more about how to support the Black community and disrupt anti-Blackness.
- Understand that you will make mistakes. The best way to respond is to apologize, fix the harm caused, and change your behavior moving forward to not repeat harm.



GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Activism

The actions people take to change policies, laws, or rules that are unfair or unjust.

Anti-Blackness

Personal, cultural, social, legal, and structural attacks on Black people. This term highlights the unique and unequal amount of racism that Black people face.

Bias

A tendency to lean in a certain direction, either in favor of or against a particular thing or group of people. Some people might be biased against a certain race, ethnicity, culture, or religion because they have been told negative things about that group.

Black (People)

A racial classification of people often used to describe people who are thought to have dark skin or ancestry (family) from Africa. The Black community consists of many different communities, skin tones, histories, and rich ancestral backgrounds.

Bystander

A person who is present at an event or who knows about it happening without participating in it.

Chattel Slavery

The system of enslaving Black people and treating them as property.

Colorism

Discrimination based on skin color. Colorism often disadvantages dark-skinned people while privileging those with lighter skin. All communities, including communities of color, can be influenced by colorism.

Cultural Appropriation

When someone takes a marginalized or targeted community's cultural expressions, ideas, history, or practices without permission and claims them as their own to further personal interests. It often doesn't respect the original meaning or history, or give credit to their source. It can also reinforce stereotypes.

Culture

An action or practice, shared by a community, which is often seen as important and has been done over a long period of time. Culture is something all people and communities participate in vocally, visually, and through the written word.



Discrimination

Unfair treatment of one person or a group of people because of the person or group's identity, like their race, gender, ability, religion, or culture. Discrimination is an action that can come from prejudice.

Marginalization

Membership in a group or community that experiences discrimination and exclusion and has less power in society.

Microaggressions

Everyday happenings that are insults against people from marginalized groups, including people of color. (e.g., "Your hair is so different and interesting. Can I touch it?" or "Wow, you are so well-spoken!")

Prejudice

Prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without enough knowledge or information. Prejudicial thinking is often based on stereotypes.

Race

Race is an idea invented by humans, not based on biology, that categorizes people into different groups by their perceived physical differences, such as skin color, hair color, or facial characteristics.

Racism

The belief that one race is better than another — and having the power to create systems (e.g., educational system, legal system, etc.) that support that belief.

Segregation

The practice or policy of keeping people of different races, classes, genders, religions, or other ethnic groups separate from one another. It can include separate housing, education, transportation, access to public spaces and services, and more.

Solidarity

Being an Upstander by expressing support, standing up for, and helping a group of people being mistreated or discriminated against.

Stereotype

A widely held and oversimplified idea about a type of person or group. Racial, religious and cultural stereotypes are harmful, shape interactions between people, impact policy, and are often believed to be true even when they are false.



Upstander

A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.

White Supremacy

The norms, laws, treatment, power, access, and opportunities that benefit white people and/or Western cultural practices at the expense of people of color and marginalized communities. It is rooted in the false belief that white people and dominant Western cultural norms are superior.



RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Black History in Two Minutes:](#) 2-minute podcast episodes with accompanying educator guides on Black History

[Black Lives Matter at School:](#) A national coalition organizing for racial justice in education providing resources and curriculum for all grade levels

[BlackPast.org's The Children's Page:](#) Kid-facing articles on historically significant events and people in Black History

[The Conscious Kid Black History Books by Black Authors](#)

[The Conscious Kid Children's Books by Black Authors](#)

[Centering Black Authors with The Conscious Kid: A Read-Aloud Storytime Playlist](#)

[National Museum of African American History and Culture:](#) The only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture

[Nickelodeon's Little Lens:](#) A mini web series exploring the everyday experiences of Black kids

[Nickelodeon's Nick News Presents: Kids, Race, and Unity:](#) A special that amplifies the voices and experiences of Black kids across the country



CHILDREN'S READING LIST



Ages 4-8

Mae Among the Stars,
by Roda Ahmed and Stasia Burrington

The Undefeated,
by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson

I Am Every Good Thing, by Derrick Barnes

I Am Enough, by Grace Byers and Keturah A. Bobo

All Because You Matter,
by Tami Charles and Bryan Collier

Hair Love, by Matthew A. Cherry and Vashti Harrison

Sulwe, by Lupita Nyong'o and Vashti Harrison

The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family,
by Ibtihaj Muhammad, S.K. Ali and Hatem Aly

Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race, by Margot Lee

Shetterly, illustrated by Laura Freeman

Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon,
by Kelly Starling Lyons,
illustrated by Laura Freeman

Your Name Is A Song,
by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow and Luisa Uribe

The Day You Begin,
by Jacqueline Woodson and Rafael López

Ages 8-12

New Kid, by Jerry Craft

Dragons in a Bag, by Zetta Elliott

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History,
by Vashti Harrison

Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History,
by Vashti Harrison

The Parker Inheritance, by Varian Johnson

For Black Girls Like Me, by Mariama J. Lockington

Black Boy Joy: 17 Stories Celebrating Black Boyhood,
edited by Kwame Mbalia

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky, by Kwame Mbalia

The Track Series, by Jason Reynolds

Hidden Figures: Young Readers' Edition
by Margot Lee Shetterly

Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre,
by Carole Boston Weatherford and Floyd Cooper

Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library,
by Carole Boston Weatherford and Eric Velasquez

Young, Gifted and Black: Meet 52 Black Heroes From Past and Present,
by Jamia Wilson and Andrea Pippins

Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson



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