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the conscious kid

# **TALK AND TAKE ACTION:**

**EDUCATORS'  
GUIDE TO  
DISMANTLING  
ANTI-BLACKNESS**

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# Nickelodeon's Talk and Take Action: Educators' Guide to Dismantling Anti-Blackness

**Anti-Blackness** refers to 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. 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 to specifically 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 educators feel supported as they navigate these tough topics with their students.

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

# TALKING WITH STUDENTS 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, ensure 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. If you are a part of the Black community or have been personally impacted by racism and/or discrimination due to your multiple identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, home language, etc.), it may be difficult to revisit those painful experiences. Be aware of emotions that may arise. As an educator, take note of how this affects you before you engage with your students. Consider sharing your thoughts with another trusted adult.

**2. Review the guides.** Creating a safe space to discuss tough topics like discrimination and hate sends a powerful message to your students. However, these topics are challenging, and you may need help in preparing for these conversations. If that's the case, 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 discussions to support your students' learning. Focus on the information that you feel is most meaningful and relevant to your students' lived experiences and your specific conversation's focus.

**3. Lay the foundation.** Before having conversations about difficult topics like discrimination, bias, and hate, it's important to lay the foundation for respectful dialogue. With children, set the tone by establishing age-appropriate community agreements. Community agreements help set the tone and build/deepen rapport between caring adults and children.

**4. Prepare to be transparent.** Talking honestly and openly about difficult topics models behavior that fosters open lines of communication with children. In fact, acknowledging that some topics are difficult to talk about encourages kids to express their feelings, even when it's not easy.

## ACTIVITIES: ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

1. Share your lesson objective(s) with students: Today we are going to think about how we want to treat and talk with each other as we learn about \_\_\_\_.
2. Briefly explain "the how." We are going to develop a list of norms. Briefly describe that norms are shared expectations of acceptable behavior by groups.
3. Ask students to brainstorm the following prompt: What would help us work together best as we learn about \_\_\_\_?
4. Encourage students to answer the prompt by providing an example to begin the discussion: "What would help us work best together is not interrupting each other when we are speaking." Develop 3 to 5 community agreements based on children's responses.





**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 students your undivided attention. Encourage them to ask questions and revisit the community agreements that guide these conversations. Pay attention to the questions they ask and any emotional responses that may be evoked or suppressed by the information being presented. Look out for body language cues, as well as what they are saying. The goal is for students to feel safe and secure.

**7. Validate their feelings.** Ask students to name their feelings — afraid, frustrated, excluded — and encourage them to explain why they feel the way they do.

- If misinformation is involved, share the proper and accurate information with them.
- If the student is demonstrating a lack of empathy or having a hard time “seeing” the perspectives of others, ask them to think of the issue from the perspective of another person.
- Some students may be more likely to suppress their emotions due to learned gender, social, or cultural roles.

**8. If you don’t know, just say so.** Answer questions as clearly and honestly as you can, using developmentally appropriate language and definitions. If you don’t know the answer to a question, just say so. Be sure to follow up afterward.

**9. Help them frame the situation.** Providing students with context is useful when helping them make sense of acts of bullying, hate, or violence. If they ask why someone would direct hate at someone based on their identity, you could say, “Some people wrongly believe that certain identities are better than others. They may have gotten these wrong ideas from stereotypes we see and hear in the media. Without the correct information, they sometimes commit acts of violence against other people and think it’s ok based on their beliefs.”

**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 against hate and discrimination. For example, learning about and standing in solidarity with others or volunteering time to a cause. If you need support, each guide includes a list of actions you can take as a classroom to leave the conversation feeling empowered and prepared to build a more just and compassionate world.



# TALKING WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ABOUT THIS GUIDE

It can be helpful to remind parents and caregivers that students are paying close attention to issues related to social justice, bias, and racism — even those who we think are too young to see or understand what’s going on. By sharing with parents and caregivers your commitment to being proactive around these issues, you are helping students gain the competency to discuss tough issues and the ability to approach uncomfortable or inequitable situations with thoughtfulness and sensitivity. If your school utilizes social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and that information has already been communicated to parents, emphasize how this guide supports and enhances SEL. In addition, SEL competencies will support adults and children to address these complex topics more effectively.

**Communicating with parents and caregivers:** There are caregivers who may push back and assert that their children don’t need to learn about racism and discrimination, or express concerns about what students will be learning. If this happens, acknowledge the fact that addressing the topic of racism may be uncomfortable. By being transparent about what will be discussed and the goal of supporting an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges important challenges impacting students, you can demonstrate the importance of creating an awareness of these issues and model a willingness to work together.

## A SAMPLE NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Students are paying close attention to issues related to social justice, bias, and racism — even those we think are too young to understand what’s going on. Racist and discriminatory images that appear on social media and in the news, news stories, discussions, and events are happening all around them.

As an educator, I am responsible for ensuring that my students have access to fact-based sources of information and the ability to ask questions about things that may be confusing. I’m often in the position to field those questions, and I also have the responsibility to ensure that students are engaging each other in a respectful manner.

It is also in students’ best interest to create a classroom environment that is positive and inclusive. These conversations will foster respect, communication, and a safe space for our diverse classroom.

Starting on \_\_\_\_\_, our class will be discussing the tough topics of racism using a few resources from recognized organizations such as The Conscious Kid, The Shoah Foundation, GLSEN, and the Hispanic Heritage Foundation to develop an understanding of how historical events have shaped and influenced some of the challenges we see today. The guides are designed to support students’ social emotional learning while teaching difficult concepts in a safe and caring environment.

Below are a few resources you can use if your child has questions:

[The Conscious Kid & Nickelodeon Talk and Take Action: Parents' & Caregivers' Guide to Dismantling Anti-Blackness](#)

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

[ADL Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events](#)

If you have questions about our discussions,  
please feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.



# 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.

## **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.")

## **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.

## **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 the 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.





# HISTORY OF ACTIVISM AGAINST ANTI-BLACKNESS

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 a rich, complex and varied set of 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.



## EDUCATOR TIPS:

- There is archival footage of many instances of Black activism during the Civil Rights Movement. Utilize this footage to begin classroom discussions. Engage students in discussions of how the activists may have felt while they were protesting the mistreatment of Black people.
- Analyze an excerpt from *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Du Bois, with your students.
- Have your students research current Black activists. Have them compare and contrast the issues they are fighting for now.



## 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.

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?

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

In the United States and globally, anti-Blackness is still present in many ways. It is seen in 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 curriculum. It can be seen in the health care 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 the job system where Black people, and Black women in particular, are paid less than non-Black people for doing the same work.

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.

It's also seen in the prison system where we see Black people receive longer sentences than non-Black people for the same crimes, or offenses. Culturally, it is seen in colorism, where Black people are seen as less beautiful for having darker skin and those with lighter skin receive unearned privileges.

Anti-Blackness can also happen in our everyday interactions. It can be expressed by 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 have already developed 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 both online and offline, and saw their classmates 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. It 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 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.

It's important to learn about and understand all the ways anti-Blackness shows up and does harm so we can take action to disrupt it. Learning about stereotypes, cultural appropriation, microaggressions, colorism, and how we can take action and show solidarity are all important steps toward countering anti-Blackness.





# TAKING ACTION! DISCUSSION GUIDES

## CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to understand what stereotypes are and why they are harmful.  
Students will also learn how to identify and disrupt stereotypes that reinforce anti-Blackness.

#### **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 how individuals are 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 prejudgements 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 prejudgements can lead to acts of discrimination. This is a cycle that begins with a simple stereotype.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Can you think of a moment where you witnessed or had an experience with a stereotype?  
How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever had a judgmental thought or idea about someone?  
How did that thought change after getting to know them?
- 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?
- What would you say if you heard someone say something broad and untrue about a person or community? Practice what you could say to speak out against stereotypes.





### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- It can be scary to speak up when you hear others using negative stereotypes. Practice and/or role play what your students can say when they hear someone using stereotypes. Make this a regular part of your classroom practice so students develop a capacity and comfort to speak up.
- Work with your students to develop Community Agreements designed to combat and dismantle negative stereotypes. For example: "In our classroom, we speak up and out against negative stereotypes, racism, and hate. If we hear someone engaging in that type of language, we politely say, 'We don't do that here.'"

## 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 to 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 judgements about them.



### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Be aware that you are constantly modeling behaviors for your students — your actions can serve as a powerful tool to combat bias.
- Have your students draw a picture or write about how they would speak out against anti-Black stereotypes.
- Have your students audit your library and see if there are any books that perpetuate stereotypes. Discuss as a class if they should be removed or not.



## APPRECIATING, NOT APPROPRIATING

Cultural appropriation is when someone takes a marginalized community's cultural expressions, ideas, art, 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, 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 teachers and educators can show support:**

- Support and shop at Black businesses.
- Credit and compensate Black people for their knowledge, time, and work.
- Follow Black people on social media, including Black educators, Black-led media platforms, and Black-led organizations.
- Support and include Black educators, leaders, and specialists in your classroom.

**Here are some ways students and teachers can show support together:**

- Be thoughtful about the latest trends. Explore and learn the roots of your favorite music styles, fashion choices, dances, and other art forms.
- Learn about Black experiences, as well as Black culture, contributions, and history.
- Read books by Black authors together.
- Watch TV shows and movies by Black creators.
- Speak out against racism, stereotypes, and anti-Blackness.

**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.



## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What is an example of cultural appropriation you have seen in a film or music video?
- Have you ever appropriated someone else's culture, if even by accident?  
What would you do differently now?



### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Find videos that showcase different Black experiences, like Nickelodeon's *Little Lens*. Use them to lift up, listen to, and learn from Black voices in the classroom.
- If a student is appropriating Black culture, use it as an opportunity to facilitate an open conversation on cultural appropriation.





# COUNTERING COLORISM

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through personal reflection and writing, students will gain an understanding of colorism and the harm it causes. Once students gain an understanding of the term, they will learn different strategies to disrupt 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.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Have you ever witnessed, experienced, or heard about an incident of colorism?  
If so, explain what happened.
- Have you ever made a judgment about someone based on their skin tone?  
Did your judgment make you treat the person differently without knowing them?  
How would you feel if someone judged you before 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?
- Think of four or five of your favorite movie heroes. What is their skin color? Think of the villain in that movie. What is their skin color? Now think of any heroes and describe what they look like. Are there any characteristics in common? Do the same with villains. How do you think these portrayals make people who look like heroes feel? What about villains? Compare the results with classmates. Do you notice any patterns?

## 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.

### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Make sure the decoration and art in your classroom represents all skin colors.
- Pass out magazines to your students. Have them take stock of how many people with darker skin are represented compared to lighter skin. Discuss in groups their findings. Then facilitate a conversation about the importance of representation and the harmful impact colorism can have.
- Have your students draw a picture, talk, or write about how they would speak out against colorism if they witnessed it.



# SPEAKING OUT AGAINST MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Objective:** Students will understand what a microaggression might look and feel like and be empowered to take action to disrupt them.

## **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 adult 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.



## 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.

### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Make sure you are promoting a safe space for students. Students may laugh or giggle when they hear someone share an experience with microaggressions. Take the time to go over community guidelines and reaffirm the student speaking of their feelings.
- Have your students practice in groups what they would say if they hear a microaggression.



## MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS

Imagine you have a new student in your class. You greet them with a big smile and welcome them. How do you think the student 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 — 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.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Can you think about ways and times you can use micro-affirmations?
- How does it feel when someone shows interest in your hobbies or gives you a high five?
- What are two micro-affirmations you can start using today with your classmates?

### EDUCATOR TIP:

Share with your class ways they can show they are actively listening to their classmates. Praise students when you see them using these skills.





## 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 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.

### EDUCATOR TIP:

Engage your students in a "media scan" and note where anti-Black stereotypes are used. Have students write a letter to the person/company responsible, explaining how the content is harmful to the Black community.



## ENVISIONING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

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 regardless of the color of our skin. See and listen to her vision [here](#).

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What is your vision for the future? What do you think the world should look like? How would you like to see people be treated? How would you like people to feel?
- Think about your community. What do you like about it? What would you like to see changed?
- What can you do right now, in the present, to make your community a better place?

#### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Use this [worksheet](#) to create a vision board with words and pictures that speak to a future where everyone feels appreciated and celebrated.
- Have students share their vision for the future in groups. Then facilitate a conversation about how all these visions for the future can live together.
- Have students compare similar themes in their visions for the future. Discuss how, as a class, you can take steps to make those changes happen.
- Create a classroom vision board where students share what would make their classroom environment more fair, equitable, and kind. Then, develop steps to make it happen.



# 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



# EDUCATOR'S REFLECTION JOURNAL

As you have discussions about anti-Blackness in your own classroom, take stock of what implicit biases and experiences you may have. Below are some questions to ask yourself.

**Note:** Racism and discrimination are not unique to the Black community. While the focus of this particular guide is on the Black experience, it may be helpful for all educators to reflect on their own experiences, and consider how much they want to share as a way to help students bridge the gap between various communities, such as AAPI or Indigenous.

1. Do I acknowledge all people are different or do I focus on the similarities between ethnicities and communities? Why?
2. If you are a part of the Black community, have you felt targeted recently? What would help to make you feel safe?
3. Have I ever experienced a microaggression? How did I feel and react? What would I change? What do I wish the other person knew?
4. How do I feel when someone has closed body language when I am speaking? Is this behavior something I do in my class and what students are speaking when I do it? What micro-affirmations can I model to showcase my open mind and encouragement?
5. When I break students into groups, how do I group them? Why do I group them that way? Do these groupings provide diverse perspectives and backgrounds?
6. What is a anti-Black stereotype I see most often in books, movies, and conversation? If you are a part of the Black community, how does it make you feel? If you are not, think about how it might make someone in the Black community feel.
7. What books written by Black authors do I have in my classroom? Who was the last Black historical figure I taught about? Can I include more representation in my future lessons?
8. How do we celebrate and acknowledge different cultures in my classroom? If we don't, why not?
9. Do I showcase all skin tones in my classroom's displays, artwork, library, and lessons? If not, why?
10. Have I ever engaged in cultural appropriation in the classroom? How can I use my teaching to counter anti-Blackness?



# 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





# 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.

# **KIDS' SECTION**

Anti-Blackness is not new. It's important to learn about and understand all the ways anti-Blackness shows up and does harm so we can take action to disrupt it. There are many ways you can take action and show solidarity.

### **Take Action! Steps to Dismantle Anti-Blackness:**

- Speak up or find a teacher if you witness racism, anti-Blackness and colorism at school or in your community.
- Learn about race and racism — including the history and contributions of Black people in the United States and globally, and understanding how racism has impacted the Black community historically and currently.
- Explore books, movies, and music created by Black authors and artists.
- Commit to treating others with respect and spreading kindness by avoiding teasing, bullying or joking about Black people online and in person.
- Listen and learn from Black people and perspectives.
- Believe Black people when they say something is discriminatory or hurtful.
- Advocate for Black history, experiences and contributions in school.
- Recognize and call out anti-Black stereotypes in TV shows, books, and movies.
- Understand that you will make mistakes. The best way to respond is to apologize, fix the harm caused, and change your behavior.



## KEY TERMS AT A GLANCE

### **Anti-Blackness**

The personal, cultural, social, legal, and structural attacks on Black people.

This term highlights the unique and unequal amount of racism that Black people face.

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### **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.

# KIDS' REFLECTION JOURNAL

You may have experienced or seen your classmates experience anti-Blackness.

Take some time to reflect and think about these interactions.

1. Have you read a book, seen a movie, or overheard someone say a stereotype about the Black community?
  - Why do you think it is harmful?
  - Take a look in your classroom library, do any books have stereotypes? Write them down and tell your teacher!
  - If you are a part of the Black community, has someone stereotyped you?
    - How did it make you feel?
    - How can someone support you if it happens again?
2. You overhear someone say the below microaggressions. What are some things you can say or do to combat them?

- Your hair is so different and interesting. Can I touch it?

- You don't dress like a Black person.

- You don't sound like a Black person.



3. Think about your own skin color. Do you see it represented on TV, in magazines, or in movies?
- If you do see it, how does that make you feel? How would you feel if you didn't?
  - If you don't see it often, how does that make you feel?
  - What about other skin tones? Are they as represented as yours? Why do you think that is?
4. Can you give an example of cultural appropriation that you have seen in a movie or music video?
- What part of the community's culture was appropriated?
  - Why do you think this is harmful to that community?
5. What are some ways you can show solidarity or support for the Black community? List three small ways you plan to take immediate action.
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is a future action you would like to take? What support do you need to take it? There are many instances of Black joy and celebration. On a blank sheet of paper, draw what you will do, or already do, to celebrate and appreciate Black culture.



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We extend our deepest appreciation to The Conscious Kid, Dr. Lorea Martínez, Laura Stricker, Janella Watson, and Dr. Nickey Woods, who contributed content and provided invaluable insight.