

AN
ANTI-RACISM
CONVERSATION
FOR ALL OF US

A community guide to discussing Jennifer Harvey's *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*



This community guide is based on Jennifer Harvey's *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America* and was written by Cindy Wang Brandt. Cindy is the author of *Parenting Forward: How to Raise Children with Justice, Mercy, and Kindness* and podcast host of *Parenting Forward*.

Raising White Kids is available wherever fine books are sold.



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How to Use This Discussion Guide

Every group setting is different so this discussion guide serves as a jumping-off point for conversations after reading *Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey. We have included a lot of questions and conversation prompts that would take multiple meetings to discuss. If you are discussing the book in one night, for example, then you might choose instead to pick a handful of questions from this guide instead of trying to go through the entire guide. The questions are divided by chapter to help you organize how you will discuss the book as a group.

In addition to reviewing the book as a group, a video of Jennifer Harvey giving a presentation at a Des Moines, Iowa, Showing Up for Racial Justice meeting is available online at RaisingWhiteKids.com. You may view that video as a group, or individually, and use questions from this guide as a starting point to discussing the video.

Introduction: Good Parents, Hard Conversations

Facilitator Notes—Define the Problem

In this introductory chapter, discussion facilitators can lay the foundation for future discussions by getting group members to define the problem we are trying to solve. Listen closely to people's anxieties about raising white kids (especially those who are white parents) and to people's own or to their children's experiences with white kids (especially those who are parents of color and/or parents of children of color). Invite them to share specific stories or instances in their family lives where they've felt discomfort in racial interactions and conversations with their kids or other people's kids.

As the book study moves along, we will go into deeper detail with concrete strategies, but for now, allow members to air their anxieties without judging their responses to their white kids, even if they might be problematic. Hopefully, this will illustrate how white silence creates racialized tension in white lives, and make visible the invisible racial bubbles white families are trapped inside. Ensure that members raising children of color are allowed to air their kids' experiences with white children and the impact of those experiences without attempts by other parents to "fix" or downplay the impact of such experiences. Seeing the enormity of the problem of white silence—both in the lives of white children and how it thus impacts children of color—will motivate parents to see the urgency of raising anti-racist white kids, and how doing so ultimately benefits all kids. The goal, then, is to highlight the problem to provide impetus to learn concrete strategies and solutions.

Throughout this guide, some discussion questions will be most relevant to parents of white children and some will be most

relevant to parents of children of color. There is no “one size fits all” way to discussing *Raising White Kids*, because our family journeys are different. But, because all families are impacted by the ways white children are raised, this is truly a discussion for all of us. Please plan to adjust the questions as you see fit, depending on the racial composition of your discussion group and your own family experience.

White parents haven’t had very many models for talking about race. Remind the group that it is okay to feel awkward and like you’re stumbling through these conversations. Practice will make a world of difference for your kids as well as model it for other families. If you make mistakes, it’s okay, just try again and do better. Parenting is not about perfection, but the journey of learning and growing.

It’s also important to recognize together as a group that because of the lack of models, white people tend to enter this conversation at very different places in the journey than do people of color. For multiracial discussion groups, then, it is important to name that reality together and make a group commitment to listen attentively across those different experiences.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your biggest concerns when it comes to raising white kids? What are your biggest concerns about the way you see white kids being raised?
2. Do you feel equipped to have anti-racism conversations with your kids? What are some examples of times you’ve felt stumped?
3. Do you think racialized violence and tensions affect white kids? Why or why not?
4. What have your experiences been of engaging in or witnessing conversations about race involving children, from pre-school to college-age young adults?

5. If white kids are taught all their lives that “everyone is equal,” how will they interpret incidents of racism as they witness them in the news and in their own social circles?
6. What are the ways white kids are “behind” in racial development, the ability to navigate racial conversations and interactions, compared to kids of color?
7. Do the white kids in your life feel like it’s taboo to talk about race? What are the ways you or adults around them have intentionally or unintentionally made them feel this way?
8. How well do you think you are doing to support your white kids into healthy racial identity and anti-racism? What do you wish parents of white kids would do more or less of with their kids, to support your child’s/children’s experience of well-being in the world?
9. Do you feel encouraged or discouraged about the racial divide between yourself and people of color? About yourself and white people? About your white kids and their peers of color? About your kids and white kids? Do you think there is hope, in this deeply racialized nation, for raising children into healthy racial identity?
10. In what ways have you made the mistake of teaching your children to be color blind or given them the inadequate “everyone is equal” values?
11. Where do you think your children will encounter color blind or “everyone is equal” teachings in media, schools, and larger community?
12. What are some ways we can specifically combat color blind teaching? How can we de-sentimentalize the benign sounding “everyone is equal” ideology?
13. What do you do to help your children develop physically? Emotionally? Intellectually? How much time and energy do you prioritize these developmental support systems? How might you also invest in supporting your children with their racial development?

14. How comfortable do you feel talking about race, early and often, with your kids?
15. How does it make you feel to know it is possible to raise white kids into healthy white identity? Can you imagine a future where white children are empowered and whole and capable of developing significant and meaningful relationships with their peers of color?

From Color-Blindness to Race-Conscious Parenting

The goal of this chapter is to address the benign-sounding principles of color-blindness and diversity, teach why they are not helpful and are actually harmful, and introduce race-conscious parenting as the way forward.

In both color-blindness and diversity, we can empathize with white parents of white children because we all may have made the mistake of teaching it to our kids out of our good intentions and the moral reasoning behind these principles. Discussion leaders can then move into the arguments for why color-blindness doesn't work and why diversity falls short.

Color-blindness became one of the most prominent ways to approach race in the United States after the civil rights movement. The idea is that we shouldn't notice race, should look past race, and should not discriminate using race.

Discussion Questions

1. Jennifer tells a story in the beginning of the chapter about a mother who objected to her kids' school celebrating MLK Day because, after that day, her kids began talking about other people's race all the time. Have your kids done similar things? Is it tempting when your kids name race for you to want to encourage color-blindness?
2. What are the ways color-blindness has sound moral basis? How does it sound benign?
3. "We cannot not see race." The truth is that our kids see race. Our kids are not actually color-blind. They see color. Have your kids (note their age) ever made observations about people's hair color, skin color, eye color, etc.? Can you recall one instance they made an observation, whether it's in real

life, on TV, or in picture books? How did you feel when this happened?

4. There's a difference between observation and prejudice. Just as kids observe race, they are also assigning meaning to color. Have your kids ever said something like, "brown people clean houses," or "Asians paint nails," or "only white people are doctors?" The reason they are observing these differences is because of racial inequality, systems that are constructed by an unjust society that create these real realities.
5. How do you feel when you walk into a space where the majority of the people are of a different race than you? The way we speak, respond, and posture our bodies are impacted by racial distinctions. Do you think your kids pick up on those cues?
6. Jennifer cites from neurological development studies that, as early as age five, children recognize that different groups are treated differently. Have your kids, before the age of five, ever complained about things being "unfair?" Do your kids call you out on treating one of your other kids better than others? Do you think your kids can sense when people are treated unfairly because of skin color?
7. Have your kids ever made overtly racist comments? How did it make you feel? Have you ever heard other young kids make racist comments or even racial slurs? Where do you think they picked that up? From you? Or from elsewhere?
8. Emma Redden said, "Talking about racism is not actually 'telling them about something they didn't even know existed,' but helping [children] understand what they witness, experience and/or participate in every day." What happens if we don't help them understand what they witness, experience, and/or participate in every day?
9. Studies have found that kids hide their racialized play. Color-blindness makes it taboo for kids to share how they are playing with race in play and relationships. Have you seen instances of yourself or others (i.e. teachers) discouraging

kids from sharing racialized play by telling the kids to “just be friends?” Do you think your kids feel comfortable sharing about race with you? How can we make it less taboo for our kids to share openly with us?

10. Jennifer says generic teachings like “we’re all equal” doesn’t counteract racism. In what ways are concepts like “equality” too abstract for children? Ask your child what it means for everyone to be equal. How did they respond?
11. Color-blindness doesn’t provide an accurate description of our children’s perceived and experienced reality. How does cognitive dissonance impact a child’s development?
12. If race and racism is ignored or internalized, white children struggle to develop meaningful relationships with children of color. Can you see a pattern of segregation even in multi-ethnic environments where the white kids begin to hang out with other white kids? At what age do you observe this happening?
13. If children are not allowed to talk about color, then the implication is that something is wrong about color. How do you feel if your child points out someone is black or brown? How do you feel if your child points out someone is white? Does it feel more “wrong” for a child to point out someone is black/brown? What is that teaching the child?
14. Like color-blindness, diversity sounds benign, the idea that we should value and celebrate multiplicity and differences. What are some ways you try to promote diversity in the way you live your family life? Your social circles? How you stock your bookshelves and DVD collection?
15. Celebrating diversity is complicated because the inequities of a racialized system privileges white kids. How do your white kids feel when their peers of color get to celebrate their heritage? Have they ever wanted to celebrate being “white?” What do you think will happen if white kids don’t ever get support to address that internal tension that their peers of color get to celebrate their heritage, but they do not?

16. How would a color-blind approach be unhelpful and even harmful when discussing the issue of police brutality against people of color? How would race-conscious parenting address the reality of police brutality?
17. Do you think people of color are more equipped to talk about something like police brutality than white people? Why or why not?
18. Race-conscious parenting is not a “white people are bad” approach, but tries to provide a truer framework of how our children actually experience the world. If you are white, do you struggle with shame over being white? In what ways might you have internalized that “white people are bad?”
19. Race-conscious parenting insists on noticing and naming race early and often. Do you feel like you notice and name race with your kids often? Can you think of one instance recently where you may have had the opportunity to talk about it with your kids but refrained? Can you think of an example of one time you did talk about it with your kids?

Where Do I Start?

The goal for this chapter is to empower parents and equip them with some concrete strategies of how to begin race-conscious parenting. Because parenting is such a broad experience depending on each parents' personalities, contexts, and the wild diversity of children's pace of development and personalities, it's important to make space for each parent to take the principles of race-conscious parenting and apply it to their unique situations.

A group setting is ideal to bounce ideas off of one another, creating a safe space to start, learn from mistakes, and grow from the community.

Discussion Questions

1. How old are your kids? How would you assess their racial development? How much have they participated in naming race and engaging in meaningful relationships with their peers of color and/or white peers?
2. If you have older kids who are white and are now becoming aware of race conscious parenting, how do you think your approach to starting race conscious will differ from those who have younger kids?
3. In what ways have you been surprised at how your children already have been learning something you weren't even trying to teach them?
4. Jennifer insists there is no "too young" in terms of introducing race and racism. There is also no "too old" either. The crucial point is that we begin. What scares you the most about starting this work with your children at their stage of development? What encourages you the most?
5. We often think of racism as a set of cognitive beliefs or ideas about race, but race is often experienced "in the air," felt through our bodies, perceived through tensions, delivered

through tones and even silence. What are some ways you think your children are experiencing race in their everyday lives?

6. The goal of knitting together a race-conscious schema is to create a worldview through which it becomes natural and assumed for our children to notice and name race. Let's examine your children's schema right now. Are the voices around them telling them a color-blind message? Or a race-conscious one? Give some examples.
7. Is it "normal" for your kids to be race conscious, or does it feel like an uphill battle?
8. Chatter is the primary way parents begin building the schema for young children. What are the ways you have "chattered" with your babies and toddlers? How are you building the way they view the world through the chatter?
9. What are some ways of chattering to young kids about race? (Noticing color, hair, clothing, jobs, etc.) Let's share specific conversations we have had or can imagine having.
10. Books, media, and toys are part of building a race-conscious schema. What kinds of items are in your children's everyday lives that you can use to introduce and name race?
11. We can't just assume by having diverse items/books around that they will simply absorb diversity, we have to explicitly navigate it with them. In the organization Raising Race Conscious Children, a mother reads Curious George with her child and tries to point out how George may feel having been taken out of Africa without his consent. Share one instance you've done something similar navigating books/media/toys.
12. Be sure to name light skin as one difference among many. Have you noticed that when we talk about difference and race we are often only aware of people of color and pointing that difference out to the kids? How can we build a schema in which whiteness isn't the norm?
13. We can begin to move from skin tone to race in our chatter

when the kids begin to exhibit curiosity about categorization. Jennifer's white six-year-old began commenting, "Mama, was that person dark-skinned?" Kids like to sort, right? So that may be a sign they are ready for not just observations about skin color but also race. When have you heard your kids make comments that led you to believe they are categorizing people?

14. Speaking about race means introducing names like African American, Latinx, etc. Because identity is complicated, it might feel daunting to begin doing this with children. What challenges do you face in using these terms with kids? What holds you back? How have you felt comfortable and successful in doing this?
15. Jennifer suggests using the phrase "might," for example: "that person 'might' be white or they might be Latina!" Have you tried this with your kids? How does that help temper some anxiety over naming race?
16. "African American people can do anything!" This is a generalization about race that although true prevents us from specificity that builds a strong race-conscious schema. What are better, more specific ways we can share the same message with our kids? (i.e. "Remember our Black friend, auntie Maxine, she's a lawyer and is very successful.")
17. Why is it problematic that people interpret Doc McStuffins' success by saying white kids don't see her as a Black character?
18. What are specific ways we can celebrate successes like Doc McStuffins, a show about a Black woman who is also a veterinarian? How can we navigate a show like this to build our kids' race-conscious schema?
19. Jennifer decided to take her kids to an anti-police brutality protest as part of her family's race-conscious schema. Would you take your kids to a protest? Why or why not?

What Does a “Healthy” White Kid Look Like?

This chapter takes a deep dive into our racial development psychologically. Understanding the stages and the experiences accompanying these stages can give us greater awareness of our own racial development and how we navigate the stages and therefore frame the way we support our children’s development. Much of the discussion in this chapter focuses on unpacking the adult parent’s racial development, but it serves as a foundation for race-conscious parenting.

Group discussion can focus on reflecting on our own racial journey, making space for members to unpack our own racial upbringing, the impact it has had on us, and the opportunity to provide better support for the children. If your group is multiracial it’s important to remind everyone again that our experiences if we were raised in a white family are likely very different than if we were raised in a Black, Latinx, Asian American or multi-racial family. Because this chapter is very much focused on white socialization our various roles in a multi-racial discussion may be distinct—we are all impacted by white socialization, but our relationships to it are very distinct. Acknowledge this complexity ahead of time as a group and decide together how you want to have this conversation in light of it.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think a healthy white kid looks like?
2. What are the paradoxes involved in a healthy white kid? What are the challenges in raising white kids as white parents?
3. How can we respond when white kids express glee/relief that they are white so they aren’t subject to unjust treatment? At what stage of the racial development is the second grader in the story Jennifer shares making this declaration? How can

we support her through this development? What are some examples of responses we can have informed by the grid of racial development?

Before discussing the stages of white racial identity development, be sure to include Jennifer's caveats: that these stages are merely tools to help us gain deeper understanding, and they aren't meant to be weaponized to diagnose other white people. The stages are not linear or mutually exclusive. Applying it to even our own racial journey should be done with gentleness and empathy. The questions below ask white people to be vulnerable with their implicit biases, and discussion facilitators should use discernment in dis-allowing shaming responses to people's honest sharing.

4. Stage 1: Contact. This is the initial stage where white people believe everything is fine racially, and that everyone is truly treated equally in society. Can you remember a time when you felt this way? A time when white people in your life seemed to feel this way?
5. Stage 2: Disintegration. As soon as white people encounter the ways people are treated differently, their initial naiveté begins to shake. When was the first time you felt that rumbling? Possibly it was before you had the vocabulary to express it, such as during an instance of playground taunting? Have you been able to observe your child experiencing disintegration? What's an example? Disintegration can happen when you are older as well. What is an example of a time when you moved toward disintegration as you experienced racial inequality? Can you remember a time when a white person you had a relationship with went through this rumbling and disintegrating experience?
6. Disintegration can bring white people a lot of stress because it ushers in cognitive dissonance. A belief that equality is the

norm no longer works in the world. Describe your emotions of feeling that dissonance if you have had it: anger, sadness, confusion, etc. Let's unpack the stress of disintegration.

7. Because of the stress of disintegration, sometimes white people move back to Contact in denial. Have you felt a draw/pull back to the Contact stage in your racial development? Have you had white people in your life who did? How did you respond to evidence of racism?
8. Stage 3: Reintegration. Reintegration is the process of figuring out how to reconcile the interpretive framework that people are equal to evidence of racism in the world. Some justify it by blaming people of color, arguing they deserve the lesser treatment. This makes room for incidents of unequal treatment to exist but provides just cause for it. This process can often be implicit or subtle. Can you uncover some of your own biases or these attempts of reintegration in your own racial development as a white person? Name an instance when you encountered inequality where you interpreted it to blame the person receiving unjust treatment.
9. Reintegration is often accompanied by fear of or anger toward people of color. Do you experience fear of or anger toward people of color? Why do you think that is? Describe one example of you recognizing those feelings.
10. Examining your relationships with people of color. Have you implicitly avoided entering into significant relationships, or only maintained ones with "exceptional" people who "aren't really even black?" This is part of the reintegration stage where white people maintain a stance of fear.
11. Stage 4: Pseudo-Independent Stage. At this stage, white people recognize that if evidence of racism exists, then their prior framework was wrong. The system is indeed unjust and inequitable. Colloquially, many people aptly describe this as a "waking up." Was there a specific point in time you remember "waking up" to the reality of racial injustice? Or was it a process? What was that process like? How did

it make you feel? Have you been in relationships with white people as they were “waking up”? How did this make you feel? What was welcome about it and what was difficult?

12. Some negative feelings may accompany this stage, such as guilt that white people are bad and shaming themselves or other white people. Have you experienced or witnessed this?
13. People of color are often exasperated by white guilt. How can you work through the white guilt without further burdening people of color? What are some ways white people can help other white people move through white guilt?
14. In the pseudo-independent stage, a common emotion is fear of making things worse. Have you experienced this? Describe how it felt and how it impacted your actions. Have you had white people in your life who were experiencing this? Describe how their fear made you feel and impacted your actions.
15. Stage 5: Immersion/Emersion Stage. At this stage, the white person understands they can complicate their relationship to whiteness and begin to discover and create spaces and strategies to disrupt racism. The difference between pseudo-independence and immersion is that the former is an intellectual awakening but emotional awakening lags. In this stage, the emotional development catches up. Have you experienced this and how has that impacted your actions? Have you had relationships with white people experiencing this and how did this impact their actions?
16. Have you experienced or had white people in your life manifesting unhealthy and healthy ways of dealing with white guilt? This would be the process of traveling from stage 4 to stage 5. How did the transition from stage 4 to 5 make a difference in the handling white guilt? Give an example.
17. Stage 6: Autonomy Stage. This is the rooted stage where white people are able to navigate the complexities of white identity in a holistic way. Developmentally, white people have an accurate sense of abilities, agency, facility, and language around race and anti-racism. White people can hold the

tension of constantly challenging racism as well as staying accountable to people of color. In addition, there is the solid recognition that this is a continuing journey, open to critique, learning, and change. Do you feel like this is a worthwhile goal for white people and white children to aspire to? Does the framing of the six stages help in understanding your own journey and witnessing your children's? Your relationships with white people and your children's friendships with them?

18. The final stage of racial development is the ability to hold on to paradox. It's understanding that being white impacts my experience, posture, work, and perceptions, but also that whiteness is not definitive. It can be navigated by my agency. Can you think of an example when you were able to recognize how whiteness impacted your perception and position in a racial incident? How about the way you decided how you would interact with your own whiteness?

Do We Have to Call It Racism?

In this chapter, we get into some of the nitty-gritty of responding to children in navigating everyday racist incidents. Having established in the last chapter that racial autonomy is the awareness that anti-racism work is an ongoing journey, we can begin negotiating each incident with our children with courage and openness to learning and change.

Every family will have different stories of racial encounters and at different stages of racial development. As group members share their stories, others can pitch in their ideas of how to respond, pooling resources for both emotional and practical support.

Discussion Questions

1. When your kids encounter racism such as singing a song with racist lyrics (like Jennifer's example of "Three Little Indians"), attending a sports game with a racist mascot, seeing racist graffiti, etc., do you struggle to name it racism? How have you typically responded and how do you feel about the way you handled it? (Potential follow-up question: Jennifer responded to her daughter's singing the problematic song by saying, "Native American people don't like that song. They've said it's disrespectful to them. And since we care about respecting people, we shouldn't sing it." How is this more race conscious than, "Stop singing that song, it's not nice.")
2. Have you heard your children, or other children/teens taunt, "You're being racist!" to others? Do you think they were using it appropriately, or mishandling the word?
3. What level of understanding do you believe your children have about racism? Do you feel you overestimate or underestimate that understanding? Why or why not?
4. Naming racism gives our children agency. It gives them a handle on the reality of the situation and then they can decide

what to do with it, however imperfectly. Can you perceive your child as an equal partner in engaging racism in the world? How have you learned from your child regarding race-consciousness?

5. Without naming race explicitly, we make our children more vulnerable to the negative impact of racism. Why do you think that is? Why would avoiding naming race be harmful to our children? How might the risks here be similar or different for white children and for children of color?
6. How have you seen your child make connections between racism and other injustices they can cognitively comprehend, such as sexism?
7. In the story Jennifer tells of her nephew T, encountering racism on the playground and his friend G calling it out, “Hey, that’s racist! Hey that’s racist!” G’s parents reported being awkward and uncomfortable having heard about the incident. Can you relate? Is it surprising that the child G is capable of calling out racism? How do you think this incident strengthens G and T’s friendship?
8. Raising white kids isn’t about forcing an agenda on kids, but giving them race-conscious tools to navigate racial relationships in their time and context. Jennifer says our posture should be exploratory. How does taking an exploratory posture take the pressure off of you as adults, as well as give autonomy to your children? What are some strategies we can use to sustain engagement without worrying so much about perfection?
9. Do you feel like your family currently has a culture of engagement with race? Why or why not?
10. What are some ways we are modeling consistent engagement to our kids? Are we constantly learning, being curious, and asking questions of our kids and with our kids?
11. Have you ever felt like in an attempt to raise race-conscious kids, you’ve unintentionally shamed your kids? How can we respect the process and honor our children’s developmental

capabilities?

12. Have you ever geared yourself up for a deep, meaningful conversation on race and your child is simply more interested in something “fun?” How have you decided to let it go or persist in the conversation? What does it look like to follow our children’s lead?
13. It’s important to help cultivate in white kids the ability to listen and believe in other people’s actual reality. What are some ways we can help develop that in our children?
14. A healthy white kid does not have a sense of superiority. Showing white people’s participation in racism helps prevent white kids from developing superiority. Does it feel difficult to tell the problematic history of white supremacy to children? How can we do it in a way that is both accurate and empowering?
15. What are some heroes who are people of color that we can introduce our children to? Are we making sure there is representation of different ways people have fought for justice, beyond MLK and Rosa Parks?
16. Have you found that the literature your children are exposed to with characters of color are ONLY about engagement in racial justice? Or are there stories of POC simply going about their lives being themselves?
17. It’s important to also include white people who fought for justice. What are some books and resources we can give to our children of white people engaging in racial justice?

Our Bodies in Racial Scripts

In this chapter, we will seek to identify the way race moves and impacts us beyond the intellectual or even our hearts and minds. Guide group members into how they feel race and not just what they think or believe is happening in interracial interactions.

We want to move the conversation beyond individual, isolated prejudice, and into the larger racial scripts that we inevitably live into. We will conclude with how to disrupt those racial scripts that negatively impact our relationships and provide a way to sustain meaningful interracial relationships between individuals and communities.

Anti-racism strategies require collective imagination so there aren't going to be prescriptions for any of these questions, but creating space to share and sharpen ideas can help empower all of us.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think children, despite their parents' best intentions, automatically segregate themselves into racial groups by middle school? What are some of the voices or societal expectations that exist that drives them away from sustained interracial relationships?
2. Do you think intentionally placing your children in diverse environments help them navigate interracial relationships? In what ways do they help? In what ways is it not enough to help them?
3. Is the community where your family lives homogenous? Why is it homogenous? What is the history behind the segregated communities? What do you think keeps people of different races from integrating their lives?
4. When you (as a white person) meet a person of color, what are the pre-existing histories, stories, and experiences that you both bring to that first encounter? Do those scripts keep you

from even meeting or interacting for the first time? And when you have interacted a few times, can those scripts interrupt your developing friendship?

5. When you (as a person of color) meet a white color, what are the pre-existing histories, stories, and experiences that you both bring to that first encounter? Do those scripts keep you from even meeting or interacting for the first time? And when you have interacted a few times, can those scripts interrupt your developing friendship?
6. Have you ever had an experience where you felt like you got off to a great start in a budding interracial friendship, but suddenly something in the news, perhaps police brutality or the immigration border crisis, puts a silent wedge between you and makes it difficult to know how to proceed in the relationship? What are some other examples of a relationship becoming racially charged quickly?
7. We don't get to write our racial scripts, they simply exist. What are some of the scripts that have been written before you and around you that you live into? Do you feel these scripts are fair? Do they stereotype you and strip your personality of nuance?
8. The racial scripts written for adult are the same ones written for children. How do you think they impact you differently than they do your kids?
9. Are your children living and going to school in a diverse environment? In what ways do you see them living into the racial scripts? Do you think they are capable of navigating and disrupting those racial scripts without help? How can you help?
10. How can we remind our children that diversity is hard and it requires ongoing work? Is that a hard conversation to have? How do your children receive that message if/when you give it?
11. Jennifer gives an example of kids being told at school they are

not to divide into black and white teams for dodgeball. Have you encountered other similar incidents or have your kids reported similar scenarios? How did you respond? How could you have responded after becoming aware of racial scripts in play? What is a race conscious way to engage in situations like this?

12. Have you ever experienced race in your body? Have you felt the loaded tension in the air, perhaps when you are the only white person or person of color in a room? Or when two groups of separate races exist in a public space together? How would you describe that feeling? How do you cope with that feeling? Do you think your children can feel those feelings?
13. In the Chuck E. Cheese scenario Jennifer described, she popped the racial bubble by making eye contact with a Black kid and thereby easing the tension enough that the kids happily played with one another interracially. What fears do you have in taking action like that in scenarios where you can feel those racial bubbles?
14. Sometimes disrupting racial scripts is embodied, like the way Jennifer physically stopped a child in his tracks and made eye contact, changing the spatial and racial dynamics. What are some examples of other forms of embodying disruption of racial scripts?
15. The older children become the more they will feel the palpable racial differences in their bodies. How can adults modeling disrupting racial scripts help empower them? How did Jennifer's disruption at Chuck E Cheese have an impact on all the children involved?
16. When Jennifer and her Black friend were not allowed to have a sleepover in first grade, she suggests (now as an adult versed in anti-racism) one way their parents could have interrupted the racial script is to embody visible antiracist commitments BEFORE issuing a sleepover invitation. What are ways you can disrupt racial scripts in quick ways like the eye contact in Chuck E Cheese, and what ways are more long-term, like

embodying anti-racist commitments?

17. One important way to raise healthy white children is to seek out experiences for them to be the demographic minority. How does it make you feel to place your white children in those spaces? How does it make you feel to imagine white children joining those spaces? How can you find opportunities in your local neighborhood for your white kids to cultivate these spaces?
18. It's important not to use POC to educate your white children. How can we mitigate this attitude? How can we help white children to occupy a space "outside the center?"

Diversity Is Confusing!

In this chapter we explore the vexed location of being a white kid. Understanding the nuances of a white child's identity and development helps us both empathize with their tension as well as create space to help them disrupt their whiteness. Because of white supremacy and racial hierarchy, there's no getting away from the anxieties of being white, and there's no question that cultivating anti-racist agency in white kids is an uphill climb. But addressing the vexed location, naming it, and resisting it will hopefully make it much less vexed for future generations of white kids. Press on with grit and hope!

Discussion Questions

1. Have your white kids ever been called racist at school before? Have you heard young people make quips like, "You're so racist!" or "That's so racist!"? How have your white kids responded to that?
2. Have you ever felt like your white children have disengaged from race conversations because it's too confusing? Have you ever seen your child's white friend disengage from race conversations? How did your child feel about that?
3. Have you ever seen your white kids feel and act embarrassed to be white? How have they coped with that embarrassment? What do you think is the root of that embarrassment?
4. Because white identity and white dominance become wrapped up in one, white kids may display unwillingness to be "that person." Have you ever felt that same tension yourself as a white adult? How can you help voice that in order to validate this feeling in your white kids?
5. Do your kids' schools and organizations celebrate multiculturalism, and have diversity days where they celebrate unique heritages? How do white kids respond to these occasions? Do they enjoy celebrating other cultures? Does it

increase their confusion about their white identity?

6. In teen culture, whiteness often is associated with being bland and “uncool.” Have you seen white teens experience this with their peer groups? How have they coped with that unpleasant (or for the teen, devastating) experience of embodying that which is considered uncool?
7. Can you see your white child/teen begin to develop white guilt, the feeling of knowing white people perpetuate injustices against POC and yet they are themselves white?
8. At some point, white complicity in racism has to come up in conversations with white kids. It is painful. What are some of the ways those conversations have come up? Share some of the ways it distresses you and offer up solidarity for one another as parents.
9. Part of growing in racial development is moving into the stage of contending with white complicity. How can white parents and white adults support children through this harsh reality?
10. White kids need a meaningful way to participate in diversity. One way to do this is to highlight stories of white people who have been able to stand in that gap between being white and being antiracist. Are there white people in your family history who stood against racism? Are there people historically in your local community who have fought against slavery and other racial injustices?
11. There is a real temptation to white-wash history, only highlighting “good white people” in this process. What are the potential missteps in over-emphasizing “white heroes”?

Developing anti-racist strategies with white kids helps them gain a sense of agency over their white racial identity. Calling attention to small steps that cultivate their anti-racist identity is important. Jennifer gives several examples of practical strategies for parents to use when encouraging race consciousness in their children. Let's discuss what those strategies might look like in your personal context:

1. What would it look like to help your kids create a racial justice club? Would that be feasible for elementary kids? Middle School? High School? What activities might they engage in for this kind of club?
2. Follow parents of color who are doing work to resist inequitable practices in the schools or communities and join their efforts. Do you know of any activities taking place at your children's school/communities? How can you and your children participate?
3. Beverly Daniel Tatum's analogy of the moving walkway (like at the airports) is an illustration to describe racist systems (the walkway, and the people and resources who built the walkway), white people (those born onto the walkway), passive complicity in racism (standing on the walkway and benefitting from the system), active racism (walking/running on the walkway), and anti-racism (walking against the direction of the walkway). How can you use this illustration in age appropriate ways with your kids?
4. An image created by the Interaction Institute for Social Change shows three people of different heights watching a baseball game. It illustrates the difference between equality and equity. How can this image help you help your kids? What lessons can be learned from them? What parallel can you draw between the illustration and tangible structures in your children's lives?
5. What online forums or community groups exist in your area for you to join with other like-minded people to offer support and resources?

What Does Resistance Look Like?

In this chapter, we are exploring the nuances of raising white kids into resistance and dissent. Because of every child's unique temperaments and contexts, it is impossible to provide prescriptions on what this will look like, and yet, the conversations are crucial. This discussion section will be a time to create space to tease out those nuances and support fellow parents in navigating these decisions for their families.

Remember, we are moving into uncharted territories. There hasn't been a long and robust history of raising white kids for resistance to have sociological research to back up what may be most effective or not. This is both a dire crisis and an incredible opportunity for us to forge a path. The only way to do this is together. May these groups who have formed to host these conversations go beyond just intellectual discussion but into communal relationships that become the grounding for anti-racist movements.

Discussion Questions

1. Scaffolding is the act of building age-appropriate conversations so that children can draw from each prior conversation into deeper, more nuanced understanding of issues like race. Can you recall an incident when your children referenced a prior conversation to inform new information presented to them?
2. As they do this, they are forming their own ideas and agency about race and justice in the world they inhabit. Have your children surprised you with their insights? How can we support them in this continuing work of learning and growing?
3. Jennifer tells a heart-rending story of her white child

connecting the dots between police brutality and how that affects her personally because she has beloved family members who are Black. Have you witnessed your children making those connections? How did they respond? How did it make you feel?

4. What's the best way to respond to our children's own heartbreak about the realities of injustice in the world? Is it a struggle for you to be vulnerable enough to expose your child to harsh realities? What sustains you in parenting with vulnerability?
5. What are some examples of history you grew up learning and then discovered later that it had been white-washed? Do you see your children's schools repeating those same history lessons, perpetuating those mistakes? What are some examples?
6. Repressing historical truths misshapes our morality and spirituality. Do you agree with this statement? Why is it important to tell the whole truth of history, and how does it impact our lives today?
7. Genocide and displacement of Native peoples and the enslavement of African peoples are America's original sins. What are the ways it is important for our children to grapple with this devastating history? What questions come up from your children when you reveal these truths? How do you respond? How can we respond?
8. School systems are embedded in unjust racial hierarchy so it is important to teach kids to question and to be appropriately suspicious. What are some concrete steps you have taken to help your children question the stories they hear?
9. Have you ever confronted your children's school by questioning their curriculum or other racial justice issues? How did it go? What would you do differently?
10. Part of developing anti-racism agency is to dissent against authorities, especially because authority systems in place are currently shaped by racism. What are some ways we give

our children permission and opportunities to buck against authority?

11. Have you had an experience of walking your child through resistance and dissent? What was that like? Did it turn out the way you wanted? Was it effective? What have you learned from that experience?
12. What are some stories and examples in the news or in your local community of other young people your children's age engaging in dissent?
13. Have you ever taken your child to a protest? How did it go? How did your children feel about it? Would you do it again? What would you do differently?
14. How can we prevent from turning our children into political props mimicking our own political agendas? What are some mechanisms we can put in place to honor their agency in these actions?
15. What are some resources you have used to help support raising antiracist children?
16. Who are some examples of current leaders of resistance we can show our children?
17. How have other white parents/people raising their voice and taking up leadership emboldened you? How have other parents/people of color raising their voice and taking up leadership emboldened you? Can you see yourself doing this for other white people? For your kids?