



From the book *Something Happened in Our Town* by Marianne Celano, Ph.D., Marietta Collins, Ph.D., & Ann Hazzard, Ph.D

Hopefully, this book will help you begin one of many conversations about race and bias that will occur naturally as your child tries to make sense of the interpersonal world. The following are some guidelines for addressing racial bias in discussions with your child and other aspects of your daily life.

General Guidelines

- Take the time to address your child's questions or comments. Do not ignore or sidestep them with blanket reassurances (e.g., "We are all the same inside").
- If your child makes a negative racial comment, ask him or her in a nonjudgmental tone, "what makes you say that?" Your child's answer may provide an opportunity to counter generalizations or to increase empathy.
- Encourage multidimensional views of others. Preschoolers tend to view people as all good or all bad. You can help your child to recognize human complexity and learn to consider both similarities and differences between people in appearance, feelings, preferences, and behaviors.
- Balance your acknowledgement of the reality of racism with messages about hope for change and the availability of help.
- Be prepared to talk about what your child sees and hears. He or she may need help in understanding community events or news stories. It may be difficult to limit your child's exposure to graphic images or overly detailed information about community violence, but try to do so to avoid inducing undue anxiety.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Parents can also demonstrate behaviors that promote children's positive attitudes towards racial and cultural diversity. Make a proactive effort to regularly engage in activities with individuals from many cultures. Ensure diversity in the media, toys, books, and art that are part of your child's life at home and school.

- Make a rule that it's not acceptable to tease or reject someone based on identity. If teasing occurs, try to find out what underlies the behavior. If the conflict is really about another issue,

help your child recognize and resolve that issue. If the underlying reason is discomfort with differences, plan activities to try to overcome that discomfort.

- Demonstrate and encourage acts of kindness toward others and activities to challenge injustice (e.g. protest marches or vigils).

Unique Issues for African American Families

Parents of African American children often face unique challenges in addressing racial bias with their children. Unfortunately, children of color are likely to experience racist encounters. Here are some strategies to keep in mind:

- Strive to promote a positive racial identity in your child by having ongoing conversations and reading books about contributions of African Americans to science and culture, and by participating in community and family activities that contribute to a positive sense of self embedded within an African American community.
- Prepare your child for racist encounters, beginning in preschool. If children feel safe, they can express their disagreement in an assertive but non-aggressive manner with peers who have made racist comments.
- Encourage your child to inform you or trusted adults (e.g. teachers) about racist behaviors from others. Your child's disclosures will give you an opportunity to discuss how to maintain positive self-esteem and respond appropriately to these challenging situations.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marianne Celano, PhD, ABPP, **Marietta Collins**, PhD, and **Ann Hazzard**, PhD, ABPP worked together for over two decades as Emory University School of Medicine faculty members serving children and families in Atlanta. All three psychologists have been involved in community advocacy efforts focused on children's behavioral health and social justice. Dr. Celano and Dr. Hazzard have developed and utilized therapeutic stories in individual and group therapy with children and teens. All three authors valued story-time with their children, who taught them important lessons about what children need from adults. This is their first picture book for children.

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