



POWERED BY THE MINDS AT CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT RACE

This infographic addresses some of the growing concerns of how parents from different racial backgrounds can talk to their children about race, specifically anti-Black racism.

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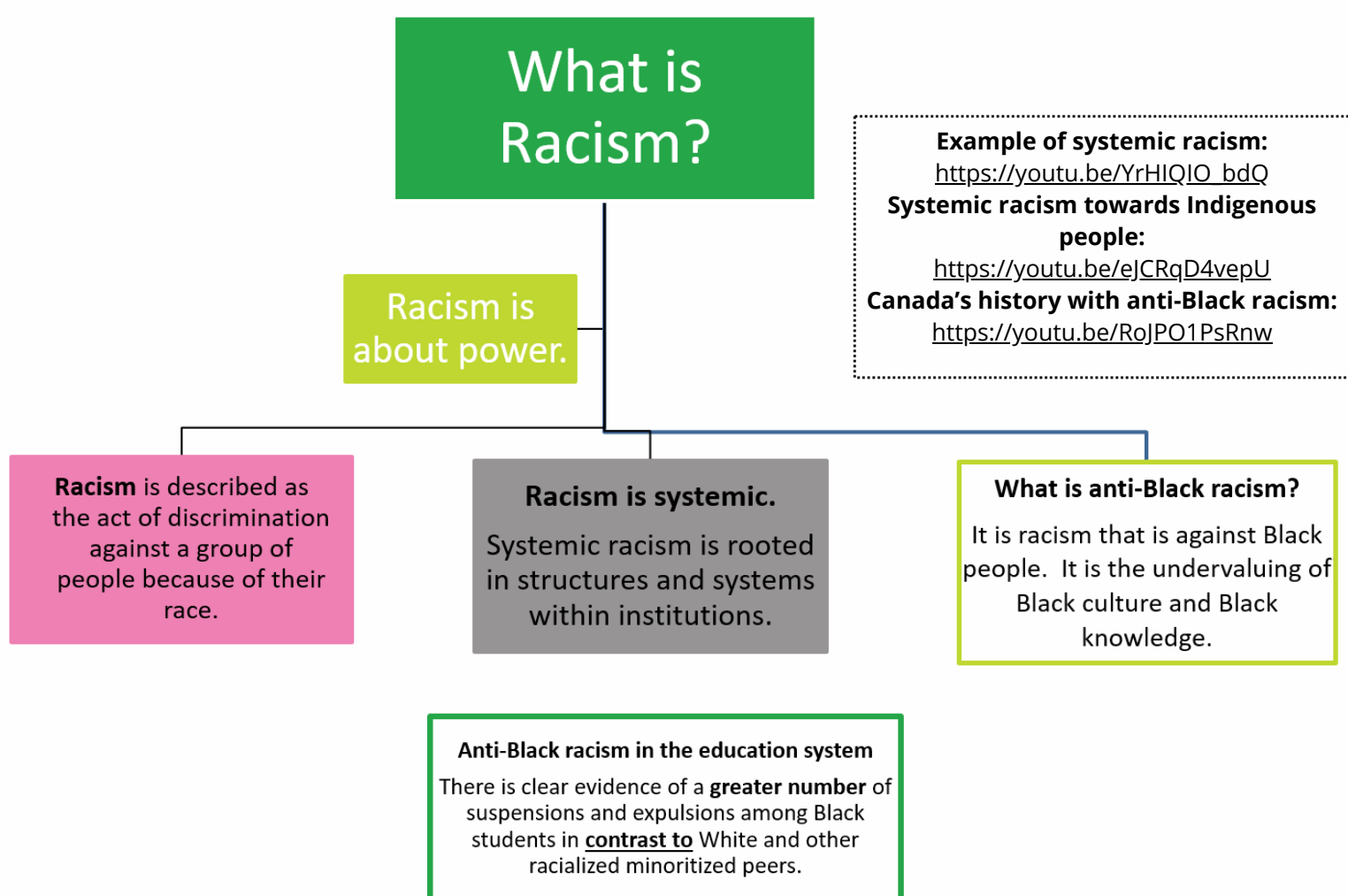
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INTRODUCTION

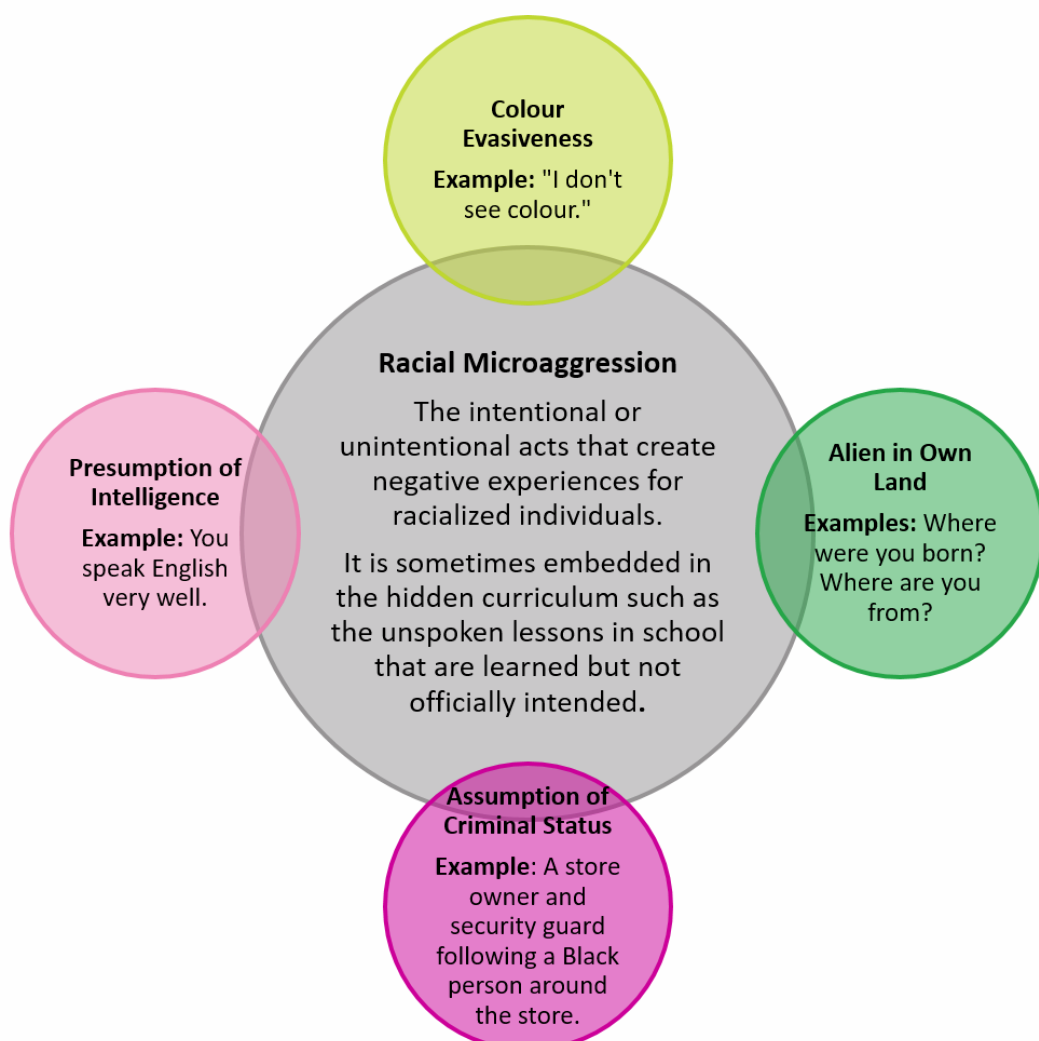
Regis Korchinski-Paquet's death under suspicious circumstances in Canada and the denial of systemic racism by some of Canada's leading civil servants highlight that there is a greater need for more nuanced conversations about anti-Black racism.

Further, the Covid-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on racialized people, particularly Black people, show that racism is not imagined; it is real in Canada.

RACE & RACISM IN A NUTSHELL



RACIAL MICROAGGRESSION



TENETS OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Anti-Black racism is about equity, justice, and liberation

What is equality?



Equality is providing the same resources for everybody.

What is equity?



Equity is extending different supports to meet the needs of people regardless of race, ethnicity, and social location.

What is justice?



Justice is about fairness. Justice can be understood as the process of dismantling the structures that oppress communities.

What is liberation?



Liberation is the end result, whereby barriers in place are completely removed and people no longer need concessions to access unfair structures that oppress communities.

What is inclusion?



Inclusion is providing the same opportunities for diverse groups of students within the education system.

Specifically, it ensures that Blacks, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized groups are reflected in the curriculum.

Inclusion is also moving beyond gender, social class, religion, and sexual orientation to ensure everyone's needs are accounted for within institutions.

Inclusion goes beyond involving people in activities. It involves creating a differentiated space where everyone can contribute to the task at hand.

What is empathy?



Empathy is seeking to understand and relate to the experiences of others, such as the experiences of racialized children.

Empathy is essential for us to understand other people's experiences.



TALKING TO CHILDREN AT DIFFERENT AGES ABOUT RACE

"The best advice I can give parents is to be models for the attitudes, behavior, and values that they wish to see in their children" (Nia Heard-Garris, M.D, as cited in Grose, 2020, para. 14).

Ages 1-5



Children at this age are still learning to understand complex thought. At this stage of development, children have a strong imagination and they are able to engage in symbolic thinking (pretend or make belief). This a good opportunity for children to learn about race and racism through their books and play. It is important for children to see books that depict the equality of all races. They can be exposed to toys that portray positive images of racialized people.

Ages 6-9

At this stage, children are able to understand concepts through concrete examples. Learning through play is also very important for children. **Like children ages 1-5, parents can still reinforce concepts about racism through play, discussions, and concepts explored in books.** Parents and caregivers can use concepts of fairness at the playground or at school to expose their children to wider concrete societal concepts around justice. For example, many Indigenous students have cold classroom and Black students don't always have proper playgrounds because of inadequate funding of these schools.



Ages 10-12



At this stage children are able to understand more hypothetical concepts and some global issues similar to their lived experiences. Exposing children to a variety of books is still an important task during this period. Parents can pose a variety of hypothetical questions to their children such as: "How can you support a friend who has been bullied because of their race?"

Children should also be encouraged to volunteer at organizations serving people from different races and ethnicities.

"[C]hildren notice physical features that often determine things like race and gender early on, and they use these physical features to distinguish between themselves and others and to build their own identities" (LoBue, 2020, para. 5).



Teens should be able to have a conceptual understanding of abstract concepts that are different from their lived experiences. Discussions around race should focus on larger systemic issues such as the disproportionate expulsion of racialized students from schools or the overrepresentation of Black youth in the criminal justice system. White and privileged children can be encouraged to be active advocates for their racialized and less privileged peers through writing letters to their school boards and Members of Parliament. In these letters, they can advocate for better funding of schools attended by predominantly racialized students or for better social amenities in lower income communities.

Resources

CANADIAN LITERATURE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

This online resource provides grade-based Canadian books that address common social justice themes (Canadian Literature for Social Justice, n.d.).



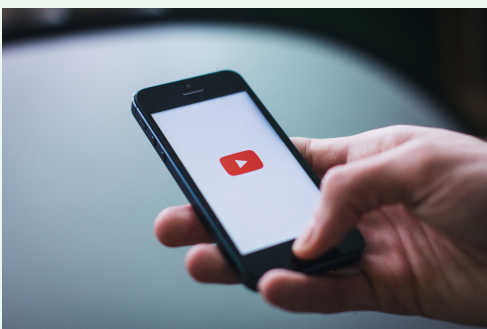
TODAYSPARENT.COM

This article provides practical age-based ideas around how parents can discuss race and racism with their children (Mlynec, 2017).



TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT RACISM

In this video, NYU Langone psychologist Dr. Yamalis Diaz offers useful insight about how parents can talk to their children about racism. (NYU Langone Health, 2017).



21 CHILDREN'S BOOK EVERY BLACK CHILD SHOULD READ

While this resource is targeted to Black children, the books can be of benefit to students of different racial backgrounds. (Anthony, 2015).



ASK CDI: FACEBOOK LIVE DISCUSSION

This presentation summarizes key ways in which parents can meaningfully engage their children of different ages in conversations about anti-Black racism. Click [here](#) to access the video (CDI Canada, 2020).

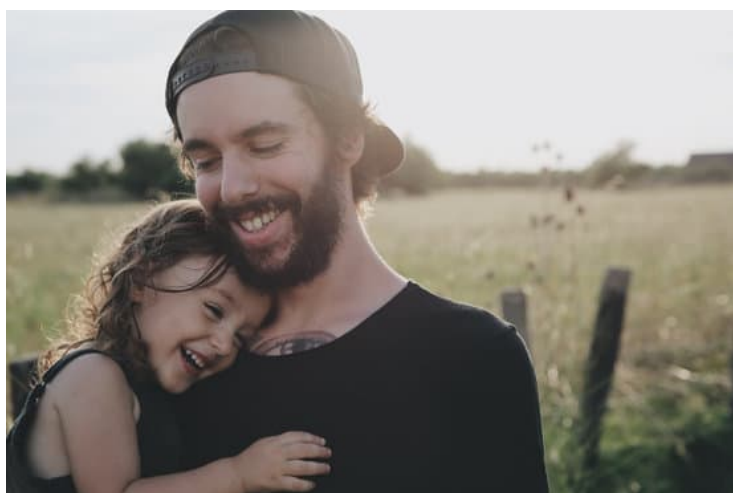


Ask CDI

Discussing racism with children with Shawnee Hardware, Janelle Brady and Annette Walker



ADVICE FOR PARENTS OF DIFFERENT RACIAL BACKGROUNDS



WHITE PARENTS



In the Home

Scan your home and examine the types of **books** and print-material your children have. Are Black, Indigenous, and racialized children central in these books? Or, do they largely revolve around white children? Consider print-rich material that centres Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) characters. The same goes for shows, movies, toys and activities. Engage your children in **conversations** about race and racism. Find out what they know and what information gaps you can fill. Do your **research** and **model** racial justice in your daily interactions and decisions.

Racial Privilege

Encourage your children to **use their racial privilege** to help rebuild better, fairer, and more equitable systems. Remind children that they are part of the system and that they too can help to dismantle systems and **change** those who are anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and racist. **White children can use their privilege in small and large ways** such as requesting that libraries include books which centre BIPOC children, challenging older relatives that make racist remarks and **protesting** or staging at-home protests in solidarity with BIPOC movements. Older children can **use their social media platforms** to highlight and demand racial justice.



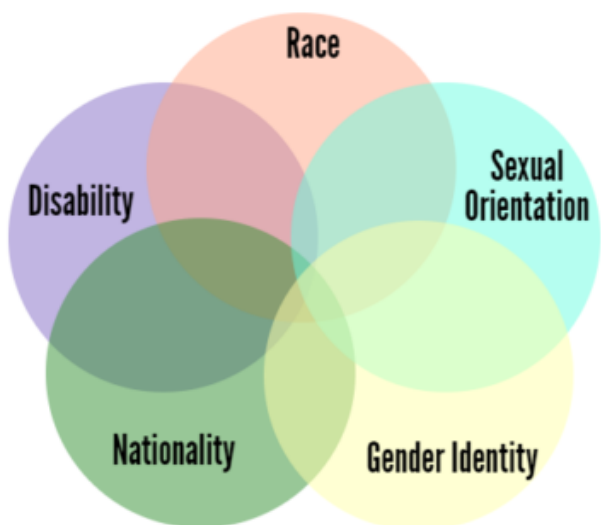
Everyday behaviors of white parents also matter:... "what conversations to have at the dinner table, what books and magazines to have around the house.... who to invite over for summer cookouts.....who (sic) parents are friends with themselves, when to roll one's eyes, what media to consume, how to respond to overtly racist remarks made by Grandpa at a family dinner, and where to spend leisure time" (Hagerman, 2018, para. 7).



WHITE PARENTS TO 'MIXED'-RACE OR BLACK CHILDREN

Did you know that race is a construct? It was created by society.

Acknowledge your position



Have very frank and honest conversations with your children. **Acknowledge** that you may not share all of the same experiences, particularly pertaining to race and racism, and this is an example of your **racial privilege**.

Acknowledgements are important, but there is always more that can be done. It is important that your children feel safe and **supported in** sharing their experiences and feelings related to race with you. **Show that you will support them by moving beyond sympathy to empathy.**

Empathy

Empathy is praxis-oriented. In other words, it requires an active and committed response.

Even if you do not share the same **experiences of racism and racial microaggressions**, you can move beyond guilt to transformative action. Start by **recognizing your own position in upholding systems of racism by virtue of your whiteness** without feeling guilty about it.

Take action in:

The small things such as addressing people who say things like "I don't see race" even if these people are your friends, work colleagues or family members.

Bigger things such as your political decisions and choices and lobbying for representation of non-white educators in your child's school or your place of work.



The complexities of mixed race identities.

Avoid reinforcing ideas which promote categories of 'otherness' by **exoticizing** 'mixed-race' children or celebrating their beauty based on proximity to whiteness. Request that family members not do so as this helps perpetuate anti-Black racism. Understand the complexities of mixed-race identities historically and research widely. **Avoid overburdening your Black family members to teach you about race.** Remember that, like your Black friends and colleagues, they are navigating racism in their own lives, so educate yourself and have open conversations.



"Speaking out against bigotry is not a sign of disrespect to your family or disloyalty to your culture. It shows that you... care enough about your culture to make it more welcoming and equitable" (Zhu, 2020, para. 2020).



NON-BLACK RACIALIZED PARENTS

Dismantling systemic racism takes collective rather than individual efforts.

Make the connections



Find the connections in **shared or similar struggles against** racism and oppression with Black communities, both historical and current. For example, anti-Asian racism during COVID-19 can be a common ground for anti-Black racism. Though non-Black racialized communities also face racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination, it is imperative that parents pinpoint how their children benefit from **anti-Black racism**.

Activism

Provide access to information for your children on **how non-Black racialized communities benefit from Black activism**. For example, Black activists in Canada fought to end racist immigration practices that discriminated against non-white people. Parents should also be **intentional in establishing meaningful and trusting relationships with Black and other racialized people**. Many elders might know about the histories of ethnic or religious oppression. If this is the case, have your children learn from **elders in your family and community** about the histories and shared experiences of fighting and or fleeing oppression. These conversations are also important to make **connections and solidarity in the struggle against anti-Black racism and Black liberation**.



In order to understand the full effects of race, we have to see how race intersects with other forms of differences [for e.g. sexism & ableism]. Talking about intersections is necessary (Dei & Jimenez, 2017).



BLACK PARENTS

"Black parents have always dealt with the added burden of talking to their children about racism but some are now struggling with whether to broach the topic sooner" (Bains, 2020, para. 1).

On Stereotypes



The term **Blackness** is used as a political tool that seeks the liberation of African people, and the dismantling of anti-Black racism. Recognize that Black parents have different levels of privilege based on their socio-economic status. There may be some Black parents who also reinforce stereotypes positioning by some Black people as the 'good ones' and others as 'the bad ones'. Some of these **stereotypes** might motivate children to compete with each other. Rather than perpetuating these stereotypes, find shared-lived experiences or pinpoint positions of privilege along class, gender, or sexuality lines.

Teaching and Surviving

Since the beginning of the colonial project, Black parents have always been in **survival mode**. Unfortunately, **its not new for Black parents to teach their children about race, racism, and how to respond to the police**. As parents have these difficult conversations, it is important they **share their own stories** about their specific experiences with racism, though systemic racism is ongoing. This can be difficult for parents, however, it's important that they share their own stories about their specific experiences with ongoing systemic racism,



Loving Blackness

Model 'loving Blackness' (Hooks, 1992) to your children. Avoid reinforcing shadeism/colourism, light-skin privilege or preferential treatment to 'lighter-skin' Black children. Celebrate Blackness in as many ways that you can. Empower your children to love Blackness. Bombard Black children with **positive and affirming images, shows, movies, books, and toys that reflect them**. Allow Black children to **love themselves** and experience **Black Joy**. Empower **Black children to assume leadership positions in social justice organizations** and help them to discover **Black figures** who fought against anti-Black racism.

"Researchers noted that Black and Hispanic mothers exist in a state of high alert to the possibility that their child will encounter unfair treatment" (Meadows-Fernandez, 2020, para. 20).

Resources

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY RESOURCES (OCDSB).

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB, n.d.)

Released by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), this list of resources and supports includes books (along with read-aloud books), reading lists, podcasts, videos, and websites. The OCDSB also features preliminary definitions and board-specific initiatives, strategies, policies, and videos.

HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT RACE AND RACISM

Today Parenting Guide (Timmins, 2020)

This resource describes the nuances in speaking to kids about race and racism and reiterates that there are no simple and all-encompassing tips. This guide highlights openness, modelling, relatability, and most importantly, advocacy.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ANTI-RACISM: A LIST OF RESOURCES

PBS Social (Pineda, 2020)

This resource provides articles, further learning lists, resources, articles, webinars, teaching guides and information for parents and caregivers to discuss anti-racism. It is a holistic resource which provides information for future research. It also also provides parents/caregivers with information to broaden their own understandings on anti-racism along with tangible anti-racist activities for children’s engagement at home.

FREEDOMSCHOOL - TORONTO

(Freedom School n.d.)

FREEDOMSCHOOL Toronto provides year-long curriculum for Black children and actively works to address systemic anti-Black racism in affirming ways through a queer-affirming and Black trans-feminist perspective. It is led by Black researchers and activists who focus on Black life and liberation for Black children, families, and community.

ASK CDI: ANTI-BLACK RACISM AND IMPACT ON BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

This presentation offers practical strategies that Black parents can use to improve their mental health. Click [here](#) to watch the video (CDI Canada, 2020).

Ask CDI

Anti-Black Racism and Its Impact on Black Mental Health
with Shawnee Hardware, Janelle Brady, Annette Walker, and Leo. D Edwards



Live on Facebook



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