

## Notes from Community Conversation January 21st 2021

### Prompts from the breakout group:

- What is the worst thing that might happen if you talk to your kids about this? What is the best thing?
- Any concerns about the process of the school teaching the books?
- Any concerns or experiences you would like to share about reading the book with your child, or about this topic?
- Any questions about this topic?
- What topics feel impossible to talk about?

### Parent responses:

#### Theme of “worst things that can happen if we talk about these books/race with our kids”:

- Overwhelming kids with stark history or with heavy topics [parents want to know how much of this to bring to kids at different ages]
- Parents are concerned about creating stigmas if their own unconscious stereotypes come out in discussion
- Parents are concerned about confrontation with others (parents or kids) being created by talking with their children. For example, if they discuss racism/slavery with their child, but classmates have never heard about it.
- Concerns about not too much too soon being done
- Possible worst thing is to unintentionally harm our kids
- Worst thing being embarrassment if kids misunderstand what parents say to them and perhaps say things in front of people that are misinterpreted
- Not knowing age appropriateness of topics to talk about
- someone heard about parents being upset about the explicit nature of the book.
- Concern about discussions around George Floyd.
- Concerns about talking about police and the views towards the police.
- Concern about an increased separation in naming racism
- The worst that can come of discussions are our own children calling us racist based on things that they newly learn that expose our White conditioning
- Finding a balance of honoring differences without creating or exacerbating divisions
- it was mentioned that many in the white community feel like or act like the civil rights struggle is over (fear of isolation? Fear of being told this isn't important? Fear of not being supported?)
- It's difficult knowing how to address this

#### Theme of “best things that can come from discussions about these books/race”

- Parents noted that it is valuable for children to have these issues discussed with teachers and classmates in the school environment because discussion at home often feels preachy.
- Finding increased resources and connecting with more families is a good thing
- Best thing coming from this discussion and the book is that our kids learn language and concepts
- They are empowered as agents of change
- They get to look at privilege and bias
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Emotions and sensations that were named:

- relief that school is taking this up
- Excitement was expressed in moving forward with this
- It feels like work is percolating in this meeting
- Parents express the need to just sit with the sadness and the grief about topics like racism and genocide and recognizing the humanity of all people

Ideas:

- Parents wanting to let the child lead
- Parents want to know how to support teachers with this process

Complexity:

- Example of walking through the Tenderloin. How to talk about a parent's fear and why the fear is being felt. How to talk about the intersection of economics and race and violence and stereotypes.
- Consideration that white members of the school also have extended families that include people of color so even though they do not have the experience of living as a person of color they might have more observation of what people of color experience.

***Boiled down by Honora:***

**Parents want to know how to talk about difficult topics in an age appropriate way with their children.**

**Resources:**

- There is a Facebook group and website called Waldorf on Fire: <https://waldorfonfire.com/> where we can connect to other Waldorf parents/schools to share support for some of these issues
- Great video link from the *Conversations in Common* website, outlining concrete ideas of how parents/teachers can use books to talk about race with young children (preschool-5th grade):  
  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSV1cddHiCs&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSV1cddHiCs&feature=emb_title)
- The *Conversations in Common* website has other videos that are helpful too: <https://www.conversationsincommon.org/talk>
- Here's another website that gives some great guidance on why it's important to talk to kids when they are young. Not that it's ever too late to start! ( I started my own journey seriously at 35!) <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race>
- Just google: how do I talk to my (insert age) year-old about race? You'll find some good stuff!

**Parents want to know what to do if they “mess up,” get embarrassed or called a racist.**

- This WILL happen. It's great that you expect this!
- Read about what “White Social Conditioning” is. There a lot of books on it, but here's an intro article: <https://checkingoutwhiteness.wordpress.com/2016/12/09/white-racial-conditioning/comment-page-1/#comment-15755>
- Knowing about what conditioning we have experienced frees us to be able to practice looking at things with more curiosity :”Huh, yeah, that was a totally racist (comment, thing I did, etc). That's part of that White Conditioning thing that I'm working on. I'm going to have to think more about why that came up in me. Thanks for catching that and letting me know. I sure don't want to do THAT again! I'll have to talk to my other friends about that to see if they have had similar things come up.”
- Working on your conditioning is hard, and long term. Here are a few groups that can help with intense, long-term work:

<https://untraining.org/>

<https://www.holisticresistance.com/>