

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race

" Why Are All the Black Kids
Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"

Understanding Racial Development in Kids, Teens, and Adults

How to Handle Hard Topics

- Active Listening: Encourage all to share their voices and listen to each other actively and carefully.
- Utilize your Feelings: Acknowledge your feelings, reflection and try to put your emotions into words. Avoid judgmental terms (if possible, prejudice can be deeply ingrained). Feedback after this meeting is welcome!
- Active Learning: Take notes about what you disagree with or don't understand and what you feel is important to share with the group.

Opening Scripture

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." (John 4:7-26)

- How does Jesus' dialog with the Samaritan Woman deal with the subject of belonging?
- What does this event in the Gospel story say to us about racial and religious exclusiveness and inclusiveness today?

Opening Prayer

Grant, O God that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” (ELW p. 79)

I am _____.

You have 60 seconds to name as many descriptors of yourself as you can.

“The thread and threat of violence runs through all of the isms. There is a need to acknowledge each other’s pain, even as we attend to our own.” (p. 107)

Understanding Blackness in a White Context

- Think of your first race-related memory. How old were you?
- What emotions are attached to these memories?
- Did you talk to anyone about what happened?
- Did you tell anyone how you felt?

Preschool Conversations: “Is your skin brown because you drink too much chocolate milk?”

- The Legacy of Silencing
- Color-Blindness
- Preschoolers are Literal
 - Black ≠ African-American
 - Yellow ≠ Asian
 - Red ≠ American Indian
- Honest Answers are Necessary to All Questions
 - “While I think it is necessary to be honest about the racism of our past and present, it is also necessary to empower children (and adults) with the vision that change is possible.” (p. 121)

Developing a Critical Conscience

- Recognizing Sexism in Boxcar Children Series
- Recognizing Racism in Little House on the Prairie
- Recognizing White-Washing in Children's Bibles
- The racial subtext gets absorbed uncritically, stereotypes creep in no matter how hard you try.

Black Adolescence

Four Identity “Statuses”

- *Diffuse* - a state in which there has been little exploration or active consideration of a particular domain, and no psychological commitment
- *Foreclosed* - a state in which a commitment has been made to particular roles or belief systems, often those selected by parents, without actively considering alternatives
- *Moratorium* - a state of active exploration of roles and beliefs in which no commitment has yet been made
- *Achieved* - a state of strong personal commitment to a particular dimension of identity following a period of high exploration

REC (racial-ethnic-cultural) Identity

- Usually triggered by “an event or series of events that force the young person to acknowledge the personal impact of racism.” (p. 135)
- How do Black adolescents cope with prejudiced encounters or racist systems? They seek out people to talk to, but many times white people are unable to help, “I’m sure they didn’t mean it like that.”
 - “They not only choose to discontinue the conversation but are more likely to turn to someone who will understand their perspective.” (p. 142)
- Their anger and resentment to systemic exclusion leads them to develop “an oppositional social identity” this is the discrimination you see against POC ‘acting white.’ Labels such as “Oreo” or “Coconut” (p. 143)
- The problem is that the young person is operating under limited definitions of being “Black” that are based on cultural stereotypes. This limits them from just being able to be “themselves.” Whether that is labeled as “acting/sounding White” by their Black peers or not. (p. 144)
- There is a need for proper representation in textbooks, high school courses, and role models. “Obama Effect” in 2008 led Black children and adolescents to try harder academically having seen a vision of academic success in the presidential family.

If a young person has found a niche within a circle of White friends, is it really *necessary* to establish a Black peer group as a reference point?

- “Maybe not, but it certainly helps. ...it is immensely beneficial to be able to share one’s experiences with other who have lived them.” (p. 154)

Black Young Adulthood

- “While anger toward Whites is often characteristic of the adolescent phase, particularly in response to encounters with racism, during the immersion phase of active exploration, the developing Black person is likely to see White people as simply irrelevant. This is not to say that anger is totally absent, but the focus of attention is on self-discovery rather than on White people.” (p. 166)
- Identity Development in Young Adult Persons Of Color is like immersing yourself in a second language, immerse yourself in it.
- Community Development with psychological and social support can be found at colleges, in prisons, and in churches.

Whiteness in a White Context

Racial Identity Statuses:

- *Contact*: A frame of mind where we pay little attention to the significance of our racial identity.
- *Disintegration*: “Growing awareness of racism and White privilege as a result of personal encounters in which the social significance of race is made visible.” (p.189)
- *Reintegration*: Previous feelings of guilt or denial may be transformed into fear and anger directed toward people of color. Fall back into blaming the victim. “If you would just change your behavior.”
- *Pseudo-Independent*: A commitment to unlearn one’s racism due to this deepening awareness.
- *Immersion/Emersion*: “Recognizing the need to find a more positive self-definition of Whiteness” (p. 201)
- *Autonomy*: “A person has incorporated the newly defined view of Whiteness as part of a personal identity. The positive feelings associated with this redefinition energize the person’s efforts to confront racism and oppression in daily life.” (p.206)

Contact

- “What is your class and ethnic background?”
 - “I’m just normal!” (p. 185)
- “I thought white was the raceless race—just plain, normal, the one against which all others were measured.” (p. 186) - Debby Irving, *Waking Up White*
- When we often believe ourselves to be color-blind, free of prejudice, and unaware of our racial assumptions.

Disintegration

- Finally recognizing prejudice in these black shootings and noticing racial stereotypes in the media.
- Will come with discomfort and therefore a desire to deny validity in these claims. Might start to avoid the news, books/documentaries, or spending time with people of color.
- *White Fragility* - “a low tolerance for the cognitive and emotional stress that comes from exposure to new information that disrupts ones sense of racial equilibrium.” (p. 192)
- People that are in this stage are usually pretty zealous about waking up others to the things they now notice, but they will get a lot of backlash because things run deep (example: racial jokes or slurs, media stereotypes).

Four Black Women Stereotypes



Black Male Athlete



Reintegration

- A fall back into blaming the victim. “If you would just change your behavior.”
- An event might trigger this, such as being grouped in with others specifically White people that have taken advantage of their privilege or ranted about white supremacy.
- This discomfort and anger can come from feeling like you are not part of the dominant White culture because of other lack of privileges that you feel.
- In this way, both Whites and People of Color must find their sphere of influence and use it to interrupt the cycle of racism.

Pseudo-Independent

- Epitomized by the “guilty White liberal” persona because the individual has achieved intellectual understanding of racism but doesn’t know what to do about it.
- Whites can’t escape their whiteness and this stage is known for people either trying to assimilate into Black culture as an ally or avoiding conflict or advocacy for fear of making mistakes.

Immersion/Emersion

- It's not People of Color that can help Whites in this stage, its fellow White people. We need other White people that are further along in the process of coming to a White identity to show the way.
- Just as People of Color need peers to find themselves beyond the "victim." White people need peers to find themselves beyond the "victimizer." (p. 201)
- "Allies need Allies" (p. 203) We need role models of White abolitionists, just like Black youth need representation in their textbooks and media.
- "While of course there is value in cross-racial dialogue, all-White support groups serve a unique function. Particularly when Whites are trying to work through their feelings of guilt and shame, separate groups give White people the 'space to speak with honesty and candor rarely possible in racially-mixed groups.'" (p. 205)

Autonomy

- Even when actively anti-racist, an event can “trigger old modes of responding.” (p. 207)
- It is this stage we can have fruitful cross-group relations and mutually respectful relationships.
- This is where God (and the ELCA) wants us to be, but our sin of systemic racism has kept us from it.

Sunday, July 26 -
"What about Latinx and Other People of Color?"

A Discussion on Race Relations in General in America

Sunday, August 2 -
"How does one even become 'anti-racist'?"

Signs of Hope and Steps to Move Forward