



Appendix I: 100 Race Conscious Things to Say to a Child to Advance Racial Justice

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In honor of Raising Race Conscious Children's 100th post, this list lifts a quote from each and every blog post to date, modeling language that has actually been used in a conversation with a child regarding race (and other identity-markers such as gender and class). Through our blog, workshops/webinars, and small group workshop series, we support adults who are trying to talk about race with young children, with the goals of dismantling the color-blind framework and preparing young people to work toward racial justice. Just click on a quote to read the original blog post from which the quote was lifted. Thank you to the 38 (and counting!) guest bloggers (and interviewee) whose words are included in this list, including Dr. Pedro Noguera, Dr. Brigitte Vittrup, performance artist Staceyann Chin, and members of Showing Up for Racial Justice.

TOP TEN race-conscious things you can say to your child to advance racial justice

1) Explicit, proactive language around race:

"We are called White, but it's confusing ...Look. This piece of paper really is the shade of white. Does this look like the color of our skin? But people with a lighter skin color, like ours, are called White even though we don't look like the real shade of white. And it's the same with Beba (her Black doll). Look," (showing a black long-sleeved shirt) "this is the real shade of black. Is this the color of Beba's skin? ...Beba has more of a brown skin color...but (some) people with Beba's skin color are called Black."

2) Explaining racism:

"The N-word is a terrible, horrible name used against Black people. It is a powerful insult meant to treat Black people as less than human."



3) Multi-racial families:

"We don't know what relationship people have with one another without asking...because you can't know which person belongs to another just by looking at them."

4) Children's books:

"It's interesting that all the people in this book have pale skin that we call White. This doesn't look like where we live, in Brooklyn, where there are people with all different shades of skin."

5) Black Lives Matter and White privilege:

"...even though people who are Black aren't slaves anymore, the history of slavery means that, today, people who are Black still are discriminated against. That means that they aren't treated fairly. But people who are White, like us, don't experience this discrimination. And that's really unfair. So now there is a movement called "Black Lives Matter" where people are standing up and saying, 'We want justice! Black people need to be treated fairly.'"

6) Police violence:

"Eric Garner was a father and grandfather who was hurt and killed by the police. He was one of too many Black men that the police have hurt and killed. His last words were 'I can't breathe.' ...By saying 'I can't breathe,' we are saying that it was wrong that Eric Garner was hurt and we are standing up for justice for him and his family. We are telling the police it is not OK to hurt people, and we will keep working together until everyone, especially people of color, are treated fairly, with respect and dignity."

7) Inspiring activism:

In response to a parent's exploration of race with her children, they wrote this letter to Legos:
"Dear Lego Friends, I really like your legos. There are just two problems for me. The girls don't have pants and we need more brown-skinned girls and boys."

8) Gender identity and sexism:

"You know what? That boy wasn't just being mean," I said. "There's a word for what he was being. He was being 'sexist.'"



9) Holidays:

Thanksgiving/Thanks-taking: "A long time ago, a group of White people called the Pilgrims came from Europe to what we now call the United States. They came here because they didn't have freedoms where they lived and it wasn't fair...But, there were other people already living here called Native Americans or American Indians. Over time, more and more White people came here and ended up hurting the Native Americans. So in the end, the Pilgrims got their freedoms, but the American Indians lost those same freedoms. Today, there are still a lot of people who don't have access to the same freedoms and privileges that the Pilgrims came to the United States to find."

10) Issue specific topics:

Homelessness: "The world we live in is unfair. Some people have a lot more than they need—and because of that, other people don't have enough of what they need. This man is asking for money because he doesn't have enough of what he needs: food, a home, etc."

Explicit, proactive language around race

11) "Look, these children all have different shades of skin. Some have lighter skin we call White, like us. Some have darker skin and might be Black or Indian..."

12) "This boy has peachy colored skin...that people call 'White.' We are White, too, but your skin is more like the color of a brown egg shell."

13) "This baby has light skin like us that we call White," and "This baby is Asian...he might be Korean... or Chinese or Japanese," and "You know, it's nice that there is a baby with brown skin on the cover but I noticed that most of the babies in the book are actually White."

14) In response to a two-year-old asking "Will the baby be Black or White?" about a new sibling: "The baby's skin will probably look like yours and mine and Daddy's skin, the peachy color we call White."

15) "Both of these dolls have the same skin color that we also call White, and the same hair style...their hair color is different, though."



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16) "Mia is the only girl who looks like her...you are totally right! With straight, dark hair, and eyes shaped like hers and skin like hers. Mia is Chinese. She is the only Chinese girl in your class, and you noticed that."

17) In response to a child saying, "I just noticed that all of the people who work in the cafeteria are Black..." a teacher responded, "You're right, that's a good observation."

18) In response to a child looking at Doc McStuffins and Disney princess advertising: "Doc McStuffins has brown skin and these girls all have pale skin or White skin. But you're right about two things. These girls do look similar to one another. And there should be girls with brown skin on this box, too."

19) "Usually people call people who look like us 'White,' even though our skin isn't actually White. Usually people call other people with very dark skin 'Black,' even though their skin isn't actually Black."

20) "I'm trying to see which color crayon matches my skin color."

21) "Puerto Ricans come in all colors and shades."

22) "This is your friend Nestor. He has brown skin and really curly hair. This is his mom. She is from the Dominican Republic. She also has brown skin."

23) "You know sometimes we form hypotheses about people based on their race or their gender and I think that Ruby's mom might have been making an assumption about you both because you are a boy and because you are brown—what do you think?"

Explaining racism

24) "Hmm, yes, I guess they do resemble Daddy, but you know what? Daddy doesn't like those statues, and neither do I, because we think they could be making fun of people who look like Daddy."

25) "In our school, we don't make fun of other people—and when we pretend to change the way our eyes look or laugh about other friends' eyes, we are making fun of friends who are Asian for being different."



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26) "A racist is someone who is mean to another person based on the color of their skin. See your skin? People call that White skin. Other people have different color skin."

27) "I think that's a very rude and offensive thing to say, and I'm upset that you are speaking hatefully around my family."

28) "I don't like this video, it is making fun of people who are Asian."

29) "I don't like when people dress up like a group of people. That's not a costume I think is funny."

Multi-racial families

30) "My husband is Black and I'm White, so our son is a color in between." It was such a simple explanation, yet something many children are unaware of because of the general silence around the topic of race and the invisibility of interracial families in the media.

31) In response to ""Why did (G-d) create things so that they always match? Like kids match their parents?" "I honestly don't know. It really doesn't make any sense does it? It would be far more interesting if people, animals, and things didn't match, right? ...we don't match, but we don't need to match to be a family and love each other."

32) In response to a White child asking a White mom of a child of color "why didn't her real mother want her?" "a conversation...about her school friends who are adopted and of different races and what that's like for her and for her friends and how kind of cool it all really is."

33) "Look, these are families like ours. Our skin may not look exactly the same, but we are most definitely family."

34) "Some children have siblings, some live with a grandparent, some have step-parents, some have two dads..."

35) "I noticed that the grandma has peachy skin and her grandbaby has brown skin."

36) "Some mommies and children have a similar skin color, but other mommies and their children have different skin colors, did you know that?"



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37) ...in our family it is important to learn the language of the place where you were born. That's why I continue to learn Spanish, too.

38) "You and your sister are Asian and White...This is very special, but other people are different and special too, and that is a good thing. Wouldn't it be boring if we were all the same?"

Children's books

39) Curious George:

"Do you think the man should take George home with him?" "No." "I agree, George looks very happy in Africa. Africa is his home and he has all the space he wants to play, and find food, and be free."

40) More, More, More, Said the Baby:

"Look, this baby has peachy skin that people call White, like us. This baby also has blonde hair like your friend Sienna." Or: "This baby has brown skin that people call Black. Our neighbor Sally is Black, too."

41) The Third Little Pig (Raising Race Conscious Children's version):

"My father told me to save this gold for myself. But I already built myself a solid, brick house, and have enough food to put on my table, and what do I need with all the gold in the world if another wolf happens to come along and take my two friends away from me?"

42) Si, Se Puede! Yes, We Can!:

"How do you think it makes Carlitos feel that his mom works full-time but still doesn't have enough money to pay for his grandmother's medicine? How does it make you feel?"

43) Madeline:

In response to: "They smiled at the good and frowned at the bad": "Let me tell you why I don't like this picture. This is showing a man stealing money, which is wrong...but I don't like that the book is calling him "bad" just because he is stealing. We live in a world where not everyone has everything they need. And that is also wrong."



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44) The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson:

In response to a White student saying, “The fence should be there because Black people are evil.”: “The media often portrays Black people as ‘bad.’ But, in fact, people of all races sometimes do ‘bad’ things. And it is just as likely that a White person does a ‘bad’ thing.”

45) Lakas and the Hotel Makibaka:

“You see this block? Before it was a construction site, there were people who lived here and who had businesses here and they were basically forced to leave their homes and businesses. It’s like in the book, Lakas and the Makibaka Hotel—and even though lots of people stood up and said, ‘This isn’t fair, we don’t want to leave our homes,’ they were forced to leave anyway. So when I walk by this block, I think about the people who lived here before.”

46) Snow White:

“...I want to tell you why I don’t like this book. Look at the cover. This woman’s name is Snow White and, for me, the picture is sending the message that to be beautiful, like her, you have to have White, pale skin like hers. And I don’t think that’s true. People with brown skin and coffee skin and olive skin are all beautiful. So I don’t like the message this picture is trying to give us.”

47), 48), and 49) Reading diverse children’s books:

“There are lots of people in the world whose lives and experiences are very different from ours and if we only read books about White characters, our understanding of the world leaves out a lot of what the world is like.”

“Have you ever noticed whether the books you read have a lot of characters of color (or not)?”
In response to talking about and reading books that positively reflected this African-American child’s identity: “Yes, I’m African American. I was born in New York and my mommy is Jamaican, where are you from?”

Black Lives Matter and White privilege

50) “Slavery was when people with Black skin were slaves. That means people with White skin owned them and they didn’t have any rights or freedoms. And because of this history, people with Black skin are still treated unfairly.”



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51) "We are here today because racism still exists and because of the grassroots movement #BlackLivesMatter."

52) In response to explicit conversations about race and racism, this White parent's child has been known to walk around the house chanting "Black Lives Matter."

53) "...if you are White and you commit a crime, like stealing something, the police might say 'that was wrong, don't do that again,' and that's all...but if you are Black and commit the same crime, they might arrest you and you might go to prison. And that isn't fair."

54) "You know that police officers are supposed to help people, but this police officer hurt a man and he died. What really makes me mad is that that people who are Black have to be scared that a police officer might hurt them. That isn't fair. We are White, and we don't really worry that a police officer might hurt us."

Police violence

55) In response to:

"But why would a police officer (shoot and kill a boy) if the boy didn't even have a gun?" "Well, because Black and brown people have been treated unfairly for a long time in this country, and they still are. And if that boy looked like you (White), this probably wouldn't have happened."

56) "I'm glad that you didn't want to play with that gun and liked how you asked your friend to put it away. You know, last year, a 12-year-old boy was playing with a toy gun that was bigger and even more real-looking and the police killed him."

57) "...we are going to be with people tonight who are sad...because 9 Black people died...were killed by a mean White man...you see how all these people have brown skin? The man who killed them didn't like brown skin. He had White skin like us."

58) "...I'm going to keep you safe, and that's why we're going to this protest, to stop police from hurting people like you, and other people who are Black and Latino and Asian."

59) "There are a lot of people who are sad and mad because a police officer hurt a man who was Black..."



Inspiring activism

60) In response to a parent's conversation with her five-year-old about police violence and Black Lives Matter:

"The protesters spoke up so people will know this is not fair...it is OK to tell me about scary things because they got hurt, and when you are hurt you have to not keep it a secret because then nobody can help you...we have to not let anymore hurting go on—we have to do something about it."

61) "Some schools and neighborhoods are mostly White, and others are mostly Black, Latino, or new Asian immigrants. The White schools usually have more money and the children get more support there...It's not fair, is it? Our job is to make things more fair, what do you think we should do?"

62) In response to a book about Angela Davis and the KKK:

"Black people led the way, and some people with White skin also helped because they cared about justice too and knew that our whole world is better when it is more fair for everyone."

63) "An activist is someone who sees something that is unfair and decides to do something to make it more fair. For example, people who are Black are treated differently than people who are White. And women are treated differently than men...women don't make as much money as men, for example, and that's not fair...So people speak up and say 'that's not fair, we want justice.'"

64) "...it is a good idea to try to tell other people about what we are doing because they might not know that most of the chocolate companies use slave labor."

65) "Curtis only has two cans of beans, but Fitz has so much food! It's too much for him. It doesn't seem fair. What can we do about this?"

66) "...Malala was not allowed to go to school because she was a girl...First she was sad. Then she got mad. And decided to speak up about it and fight for girl power."

67) "These people are protesting because they think there is something that is unfair that they want to change."



Gender identity and sexism

68) "...I have spent my entire life protesting boys and men who says girls can't do stuff! So how does that make you feel?"

69) In response to:

"Rick said he likes pink, too. He's the only other boy I know who likes pink. Most of my friends say pink's for girls..." *"I like pink. Now you know three boys."*

70) In response to a young child:

"Playing with our penises or vaginas is really fun, where do you think is the best place to do it?"

71) "You know, some people are born with penises but feel like girls on the inside and some people are born with vaginas but feel like boys on the inside. We can't always tell if someone is a boy or a girl just by looking at them and that's okay."

72) "I'm also a girl with short hair. But you're right that there are boys who look like me. I liked your question because people look lots of different ways and so it's always nice to ask someone what they want to be called."

73) In response to teachers' prompting students to analyze toy advertisements:

"The advertisers think this ad is for boys, but we think it is for all kids...Some of the advertisements might change what toy I felt comfortable asking for, even if I really wanted that toy."

74) In response to "Momma, why aren't there more boy teachers?":

"In our family, we believe that teachers are very important but not everyone thinks that way, so teachers are not always well-respected and are not the highest paid jobs...As you move onto high school and college there will likely be more male teachers. There is more respect for high school and college level teachers and often a bigger salary..."

75) In response to using the word "pretty" with regard to girls:



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“Would you ask if the butterfly was ‘pretty’ if she were a boy?”

76) “...we don’t know if this little girl has a mommy or a papi...she could just have one mommy, or she could have two mommies...or she could have two papis.”

77) In response to the gender binary:

“People decide for themselves how they want to identify, just like with skin color—unless we ask (click here or here to read posts about asking questions about identity in an appropriate way) we don’t know how people like to be called just by looking at them.”

Holidays

78) Columbus Day/Native American Remembrance Day:

“Columbus was a White man from Italy who took a ship a long, long time ago before he could take an airplane and ended up in the Americas which includes where we live in Brooklyn, which is part of the United States of America. And this holiday is about celebrating Columbus for finding the Americas. But he didn’t actually discover the Americans because there were already people living here who are called ‘Indians’ or ‘Native Americans.’”

79) Chanukah:

“...on Chanukah we can also think about the people who don’t have the things that are important to them or the things they need. And we can think about what we can do to help them.”

80) Passover:

“...we eat matzah to remind us that the Jewish people were once slaves...as Jewish people, we can stand with people of color (internal and external to the Jewish community), and say ‘No! That’s not fair.’”

Issue specific topics:

81), 82), and 83) Red-lining and gentrification:



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In response to “Why do so many Black people live in this neighborhood?” “..I don’t know enough about why. But I have been reading some things, and I am learning that White people didn’t want Black people to live near them, or have much money, so they didn’t let them buy houses except in certain parts of the city.”

Did you know that before you were born, most of the people who lived in our neighborhood were Black? And now, more and more White people live in our neighborhood...When more and more White people move in to a neighborhood, it often gets more expensive to live there...and that can mean that the Black people who lived in that neighborhood before, can no longer afford to live there. This is called gentrification.

In response to analyzing a map that labeled each neighborhood in a city with its racial demographics: “Where are most of the White people living?”

84) Homelessness:

In response to a conversation about homelessness, this author’s son was playing Minecraft and shared: “This is the house I built for me and over here are the houses I built for the homeless...the villagers just wander around they don’t have anywhere to go, so I built them a house.”

85) and 86) Racial/cultural identity:

In response to this parent’s daughter sharing that one of her White classmates had told her that she is ‘Black’ and that it was ‘a secret:’ “Yes, you are Black, and it is not a secret. Your skin color is exactly the color it should be.”

“I don’t like when I hear other children ask questions about what language we are speaking in a negative way. It’s an incredible thing to speak two languages. And we know a lot of people who speak two languages.”

87) and 88) Talking about children with disabilities:

In response to a toddler’s comment that another child was a ‘baby:’ “He’s not a baby, he’s the same age as you are. All of us are working on learning how to do something better and Matthew is working on learning how to touch people gently.”

“Some children need different things than others so they can learn and be happy and successful.”



89) and 90) Responding to children's comments in public:

"This man isn't wearing face paint, he has a beauty mark on his face just like I have one on my chin and you have one on your arm."

"I know you're not a mean guy, but some people say that African American people look like monkeys to be mean. I know you like monkeys, and you're not being mean, but some people do that."

91) The service industry and immigrants:

"Well, a lot of people who work in our supermarket are immigrants. That means that they were born in another country and moved here, like Papi. And a lot of times, when immigrants come to a new country and don't speak English, working in a supermarket is a good opportunity to have a job and make money so they can pay for things like food and an apartment where they can live."

92) Segregation:

In response to a teacher's inquiry about segregation: "Segregation was when Black and White kids weren't allowed to go to the same schools...(but) we're all Black."

93) The history of lynching:

"...the people in the crowd were so filled with hate that they thought what they were doing was right. I went on to explain that he had nothing to fear because lynchings no longer occur in this country."

94) Internalized racism:

"I think that sometimes what we say about others has more to do with something going on inside of us. Like when people have been treated badly or gotten hurt because of who they are, sometimes they will treat others the same way to deal with the experience...they got hurt by racism and that's their way of showing it."

95) Confusing two people based on their race:



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“That’s not Julien. That little boy is one of our neighbors...You’re right that he and Julien are both Black, but Julien is much younger! That boy over there is much older—look how tall he is!”

96) Waste:

“...it really makes me sad when we waste food—because remember when we saw children in Chiapas asking for food on the street? They were asking for food because they didn’t have enough to eat—and that isn’t fair. So I don’t like it when we waste our food.”

97) Striking the balance between same-race and cross-race spaces:

“...I really like places like schools and neighborhoods to be diverse—but it’s also really important that people have spaces where they can share experiences with people who share their same experiences.”

98) Trump and immigration:

“Trump is not (yet—in that moment the reality was more far-fetched) a nominee for president...and I believe there are many people in the U.S. who share our view of this country being welcoming to a people from diverse backgrounds.”

99) Prisons:

“In the United States, there are many, many people who are in jail who shouldn’t be in jail but, instead, need help. For example, someone who was so hungry that they stole food...that person doesn’t need to be in prison. It’s wrong to steal but what that person really needs is a job so they can make money to buy food.”

100) In honor of Raising Race Conscious Children’s 100th post, add your own “race conscious” language to the comments section below! (*This is from the original blog post.)