

# Supporting You to Raise Antiracist Children

Written by Laura Henry-Allain and Emma Worrollo



# Becoming part of the change



The unlawful killings of Black people in the USA have sparked global protests in recent months – and the Black Lives Matter movement has never been more prominent, or urgent. The hearts and minds of parents and guardians across the world have been captured, with many feeling compelled to become part of the change.

The call to action is clear. To fight social justice and create a fairer, more equal world: white communities must commit to being antiracist.

Many parents are already stepping up, motivated to raise a new generation of allies with the tools needed to facilitate change.

However, we know it can be hard to know where to start.

How do you balance providing an awareness of the realities while protecting the bubble of childhood?

It's tricky – but we're here to help.

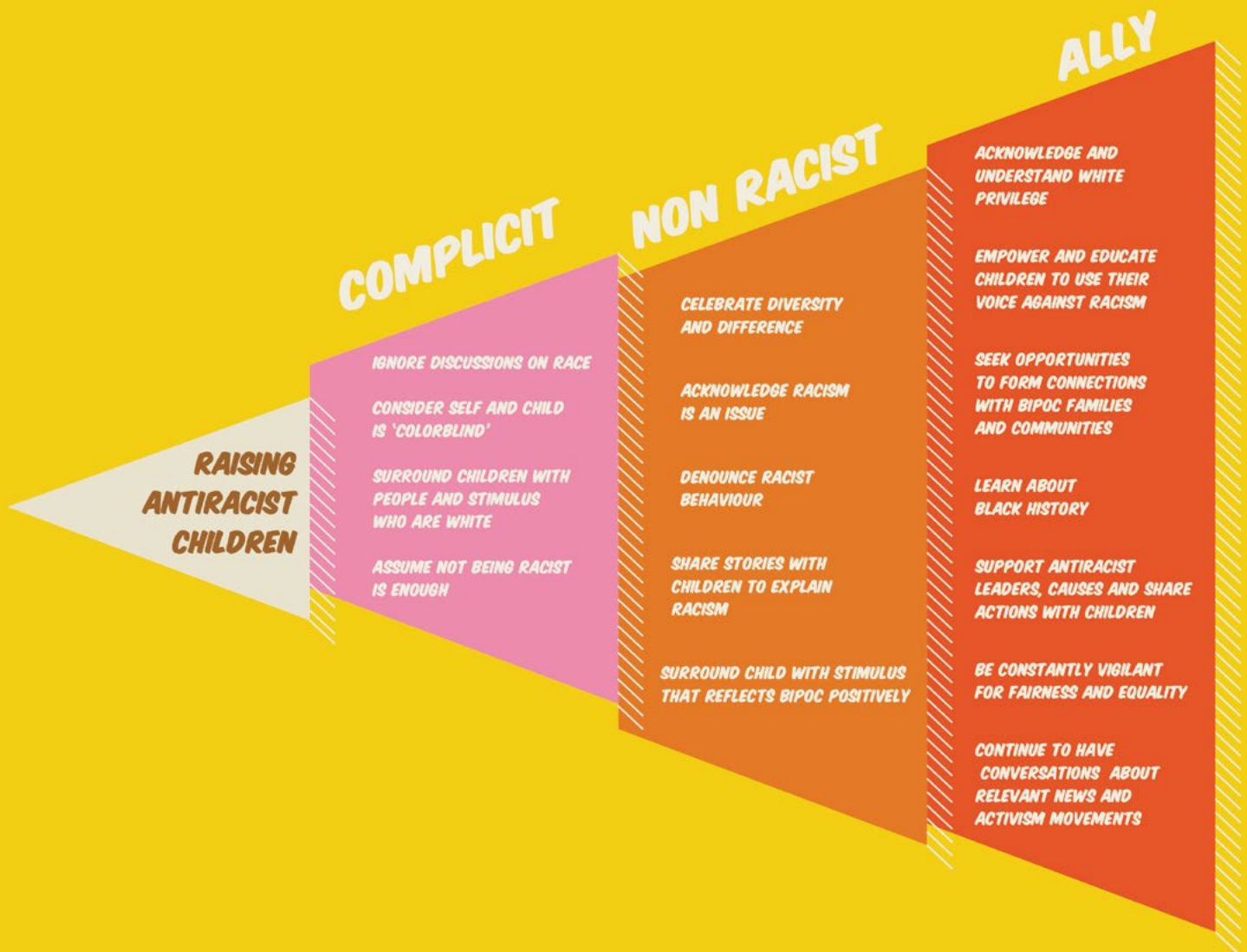
Whether it's the first time you've spoken to your child about racism or it's an ongoing conversation in your home, this is the first in a series of content with information and tips you can adapt to meet the needs of your family.

# Becoming part of the change



## What is the difference between being non-racist and antiracist?

Antiracism is required for positive progress toward equality. It means going beyond holding values of equality. It means transforming those values into action.



# Becoming part of the change



## More than 'one big talk'

We've created a framework to help you appropriately address the issues with your children at each age and stage. Becoming an effective ally is not about having 'one big talk'. It's an evolving journey which requires a mindset shift to 'learning mode'. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

## Quick Pointers to help shape your approach:

### Pick a good time

When are your children at their best? When do you have time to focus and be present? Mornings can be great for play-based learning, bed time can be a perfect time to explore stories calmly and family meal times can be an ideal opportunity for relaxed discussion.

### Consider conversing whilst doing something

Children engage best in conversation when playing or engaging in something. Activities like bike riding, hiking, baking, story reading or playing with figures are all good spaces for discussion and learning. Boys in particular have been shown to prefer conversing in set ups which don't rely on fixed continuous direct eye contact.

### Validate their feelings

It is important not to try to 'correct' or abolish children's feelings; all feelings are valid. If your children feel sad, angry, frustrated or anxious, acknowledge this and allow them space for it.

# Becoming part of the change



## Use the facts and be succinct

It is ok to shield children from details which feel inappropriate but be clear about what is right and what is wrong. Don't leave kids to fill in the gaps.

## Have the right props and stimulus to hand

Books and dolls which represent Black People are the most effective tools to use in role playing, storytelling and to provoke conversations.

## 5 building blocks for shaping a new generation of allies :

- 1) **SELF REFLECT. FIND YOUR WHY:**  
parents and carers
- 2) **GET CURIOUS AND EXCITED ABOUT DIFFERENCE:** 0 - 3 years
- 3) **NURTURE EMPATHY. LEAN INTO FAIRNESS:** 3 - 6 years
- 4) **EMPOWER THEM TO ACT. FIND THEIR VOICE:** 6 - 9 years
- 5) **FACILITATE CHANGE. AMPLIFY OTHER VOICES:** 9 - 12 years



# Becoming part of the change



## **SELF REFLECT. FIND YOUR WHY – *parents and carers***

From the moment they are born, our children interpret and mirror our energies and behaviors. We transmit our values by the way we interact with the world and the people in it. Any behavior change we want to see in our children must start with ourselves first.

It is important to be honest with yourself before you are able to support your child to be anti-racist. Reflect on your own values and attitudes when it comes to race.

Be uncomfortably honest. Acknowledge if you have ever made a racist comment or done anything racist. Ask yourself why and consider what you could change.

Sometimes we can subconsciously pre-judge others without intention. We must be intentionally vigilant about this because our children can pick up on our behavior.

Here are some questions to help you reflect on your own behaviors:

- Do you draw your child closer to you when you pass a group of Black youths?
- Do you talk about avoiding certain spaces and playgrounds because of the type of families who go there?
- Do you always use color to describe Black People (Black, Indigenous people or communities) children versus other positive qualities?
- Have you ever said anything racist in front of your child?

# Becoming part of the change



## **GET CURIOUS AND EXCITED ABOUT DIFFERENCE – 0 - 3 years**

At this stage children are rapidly developing. Research informs us that even as babies, children do notice differences in facial colors.

At this age children learn with their senses and are super curious. Therefore, it is important to provide a wide range of books, toys, images that show people of color positively. The goal at this stage is for them to see difference as something that is wholly positive.

Actions:

- Read picture books and play with dolls which represent Black characters
- Show positivity and excitement about difference
- Play music from different cultures and avoid only singing songs steeped in white culture (e.g. BaBa Black Sheep)
- Network and build relationships with a diverse mix of parents and carers
- Keep working hard on your own allyship as this is the biggest influencer of how young children internalise values

## **NURTURE EMPATHY. LEAN INTO FAIRNESS – 3 - 6 years**

By now children's social relationships are getting more complex. They are also likely to be exposed to more formal learning environments with teachers and role models.

Now is the time to introduce natural conversations about race and teach your child what racism is.

At this age children become aware of, and often preoccupied with, the idea of fairness. Using stories and discussion, lean into this understanding using race related examples to allow them to identify unfair treatment explaining this can happen based on skin color.

# Becoming part of the change



Working on your child's empathy is priority at this stage. Role play is the most effective way to teach this; playing out stories with dolls and figures, dressing up and becoming different people are all play patterns which help children strengthen their empathy skills.

## Actions:

- Ensure your bookshelves include stories which address racism AND stories featuring Black protagonists. Children should see Black children and families being happy and doing things just like them, not only in narratives about race
- When reading these stories together use questions like - I wonder how they feel? Do you think this person might be being racist? What would you do next if you were in this story? How do you feel?
- Support your child in their role play and play with them e.g. you could act out a scenario where a group of White dolls are leaving out a Black doll and ask them to resolve the situation positively

## **EMPOWER THEM TO ACT. FIND THEIR VOICE – 6 - 9 years**

At this stage children are able to have meaningful and detailed conversations to describe their feelings. This means you can deepen your discussions on racism to include themes of social justice and race equality.

Articles, opinion pieces and research can help you understand and communicate important messages at this stage when children respond well to facts and knowledge.

As peer groups get tighter and children can become involved with more complex communication channels like texting and online gaming, children need to be empowered to speak up and take action when they observe racism.

- Expose them to news media - websites, magazines, videos - which translate news into child appropriate formats. Watch, read and discuss together



# Becoming part of the change



- Encourage your child to write about key events and news you have discussed
- Ask your child's school about how their curriculum covers Black history. Read stories about Black history with your child
- Teach them what to do when they witness racism:
  - Call it out, encourage them to say 'that is racist, it's not ok to say that'
  - Step in and show support to those being marginalised by playing with them, offering a hug, physically standing by their side
  - Report racist behavior to an adult
- Tell them about your own actions. Make donations together. Show them petitions you are signing.

## **FACILITATE CHANGE. AMPLIFY OTHER VOICES – 9 - 12 years**

At this stage children are beginning to recognise complex ideas and form their own opinions. This is a great window for children to become agents of change. They can now take ownership of the antiracist part of their identity and their own allyship.

They should now be able to 'call out' racism and confidently challenge others with facts. This is also the time to discuss their own white privilege and the responsibility within this to amplify marginalised voices.

- Use board game metaphors to explain white supremacy and privilege e.g. Monopoly with adapted rules which allows white players to start with more money, avoid going to jail and get a head start on buying property
- Expose them to positive young Black role models via Ted Talks, YouTube and other media
- Encourage them to take part in activism
- Expose them to media which explores more complex narratives around social injustice and uses real life storytelling to engage their empathy
- Discuss news stories of social injustice succinctly, focussing on the facts and encouraging questions

# Becoming part of the change



We hope this has provided some useful reflections and ideas to support your journey of raising antiracist children. We understand this is complex and ongoing journey and we'll be providing further materials and resources to support your progress.



Laura Henry-Allain is an expert international award-winning Early Education specialist. She is the vice-president of The British Association for Early Childhood Education, an educational consultant for the BBC, Early Years expert in residence at Tineys and an ambassador for the Jermain Defoe Foundation. Laura's popular children's books 'JoJo and Gran Gran' have been transformed into the first black British family animation series which is currently airing on CBeebies in the UK. Laura lives in England and is a mother to 2 sons.

*FB/IG: @LauraHenryConsultancy*

*Twitter: @IamLauraHenry*



Emma Worrollo is founder of a global insight agency The Pineapple Lounge. Emma is an expert in kid-culture who studies the media, play patterns, trends and influencers that are shaping how kids think and feel about the world. Emma has a thriving IG community of parents where she writes and vlogs about the essential role of play in family life and advises parents on modern challenges of raising a family. Emma lives in England and is the mother of 2 elementary-aged children and a new baby.

*IG: @the\_playful\_den / @tplresearch*

*thepineapplelounge.com*