



How we evaluate our books

Perspective: Who is centered in the story?

For the topic of race, we chose to look at books featuring children encouraged and celebrated for being themselves within their race and culture. We wanted to center the topic of race from a place of pride and playfulness, to connect all readers with joyful possibilities while also using that as a place to discuss why we need books about black joy specifically and why books about white joy are different.

Depth of Character

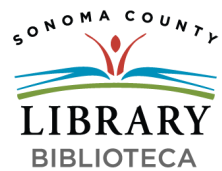
Do the characters represented have multi-faceted experiences? Do they represent the culture they live in as well as the reality that each person and family is unique? Do the characters portrayed racist stereotypes?

Terminology

We are capitalizing the word “Black” to indicate we are talking about the shared identity and community of a people. Within the context of discussions about racism, capitalizing the word Black helps us offer respect toward shared experiences of oppressed groups. The concept of Black Joy began as a social media push against the onslaught of trauma and tragedy usually associated with Black History narratives. Black Joy thus becomes a resistant, revolutionary term that widens positive and realistic Black representation in media and the world.

Author’s Experience

When an author has a connection to the community and experiences they are writing about, it can help to center the community. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center keeps track of statistics related to race and publishing. In 2021, based on the 3410 books reviewed, 450 books were written with Black/African representation but only 313 were from by authors from these communities. This is a huge increase from 2018 where only half of the books about Black communities were written by Black authors. These numbers are indicative of the systemic racism in publishing; white authors and illustrators are often offered more money and given more opportunities than Black authors and illustrators, even while providing the diverse content that is necessary and popular.



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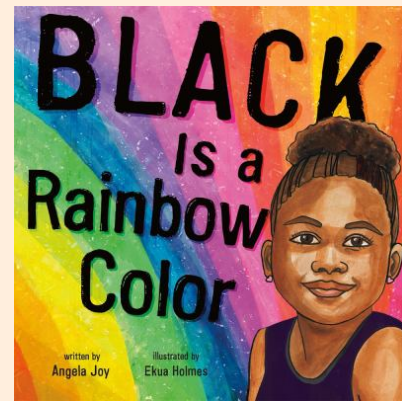


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READING JUSTICE *Family Book Club*

How do we talk about race?



Children are aware of differences in skin color before they are two years old, and by age four can internalize racial bias. These statistics offer the opportunity to talk openly about race with our children. When we as caregivers ignore the racial bias our children are observing, the silence unintentionally creates a barrier to further conversation. We want our children to recognize the humanity in all people; to recognize the worth and contributions of everyone they interact with, and starting conversations about race early is one of the best ways to do that.

Ways to Begin Race Conversations

- Acknowledge and celebrate differences that children observe. Let children know it is okay to talk about differences they see in the world by providing space to do so. Reading books about people with different racial backgrounds than our own family's is a perfect opportunity to ask questions and make observations together
- Encourage your family to consume media with diverse representation. When children are surrounded by stories and characters of primarily white people it creates a false reality of whiteness as a default. When we read and reflect on books featuring the real joy of black lives, we can connections based on our shared humanity.
- Once we build an ongoing conversation about how our lives share similarities and differences with people of diverse races, it becomes easier to move onto discussion of the harmful systems in place that divide us and hurt some people more than others.
- It's okay to make a mistake. You can always revisit the conversation again and adjust.
- We might feel guilty or bad about addressing how our race has perpetuated racism, but it is only by acknowledging the



Discussion Questions

Watch the video on youtube and use these as family discussion starters
<https://youtu.be/4piFGAKNZjk>

1. Have you noticed how people with different skin colors are treated differently in books, television and the world? What have you noticed? Do you have any ideas about how this came to be?
2. Do you recognize things in these books that you are proud of in your family or in yourself?
3. How does it make you feel to see Black children being celebrated?
4. Do you notice how your race is celebrated in books and in the world, is it different from other races?

More Resources

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

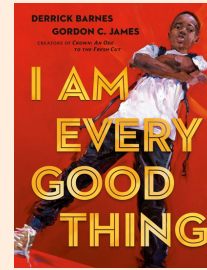
<https://www.racepride.pitt.edu/about-pride/>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/childrens-books-to-celebrate-black-culture>

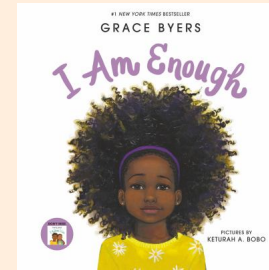
<https://www.embracerace.org/resources/you-can-do-it-talking-to-young-children-about-race>

<https://inclusions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Children-are-Not-Colorblind.pdf>

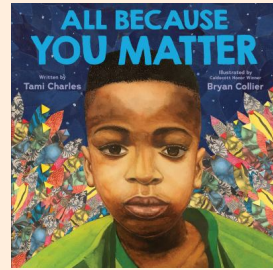
Great Books: Reading Justice



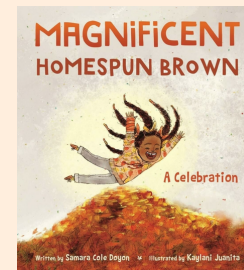
I Am Every Good Thing
E BARNES



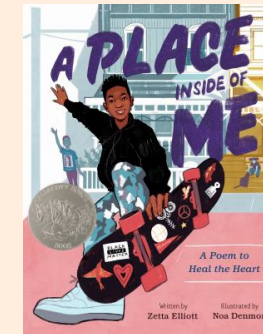
I Am Enough
E BYERS



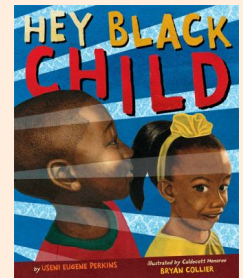
All Because You Matter
E CHARLES



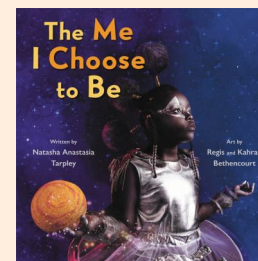
Magnificent Homespun Brown
E DOYON



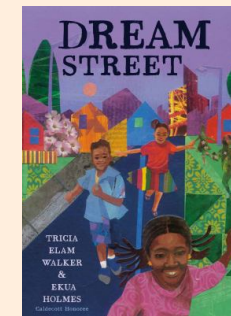
A Place Inside of Me
E ELLIOTT



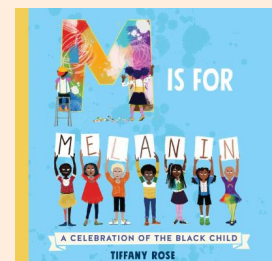
Hey Black Child
E PERKINS



The Me I Choose to Be
E TARPLEY



Dream Street
E WALKER



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Join is for a live book discussion

May 27, 2022 4:30pm

Register at <https://events.sonomalibrary.org/>