

# CONCEPTUALIZING RACE AND DIVERSITY THROUGH STORYTELLING:

## *A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING APPROACH*



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# WHY IS DISCUSSING RACE IMPORTANT IN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

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- We all see color BUT we LEARN to attach negative stereotypes. SEL can stop that.
- Talking about race and racism leads to LESS prejudice in children (Aboud & Doyle, 1996).
- Children with diverse friends and diverse experiences have BETTER social skills (Lease & Blake, 2005).
- Talking about race and racism is beneficial for ALL races and all settings (urban, rural, suburban).

# IS THERE A RACE PROBLEM IN THE “POST-RACIAL” UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?

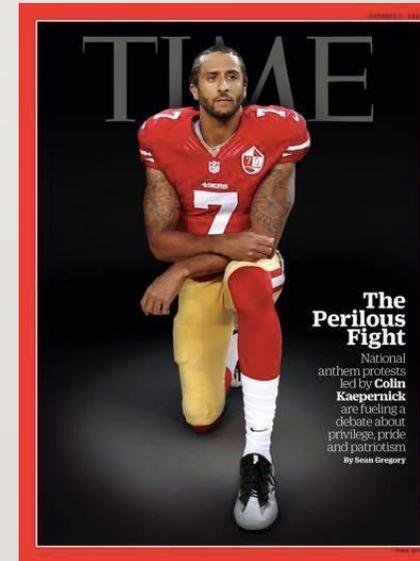


- Black Lives Matter protests of the murders of unarmed Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, John Crawford, Rekia Boyd, Sandra Bland etc..
- Charleston South Carolina Massacre, Summer 2015
- Ferguson, Missouri Protests, 2015
- University of Missouri Protests, 2015
- Baltimore, Maryland Riots, 2015
- Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray Trial verdicts, 2016
- Hillary Clinton’s interpretation that Donald Trump’s presidential slogan “Make America Great Again” is code for White Supremacy.
- Black Entertainment Awards speech by Jesse Williams (Actor, Greys Anatomy) backlash.

# IS THERE A RACE PROBLEM IN THE “POST-RACIAL” UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?

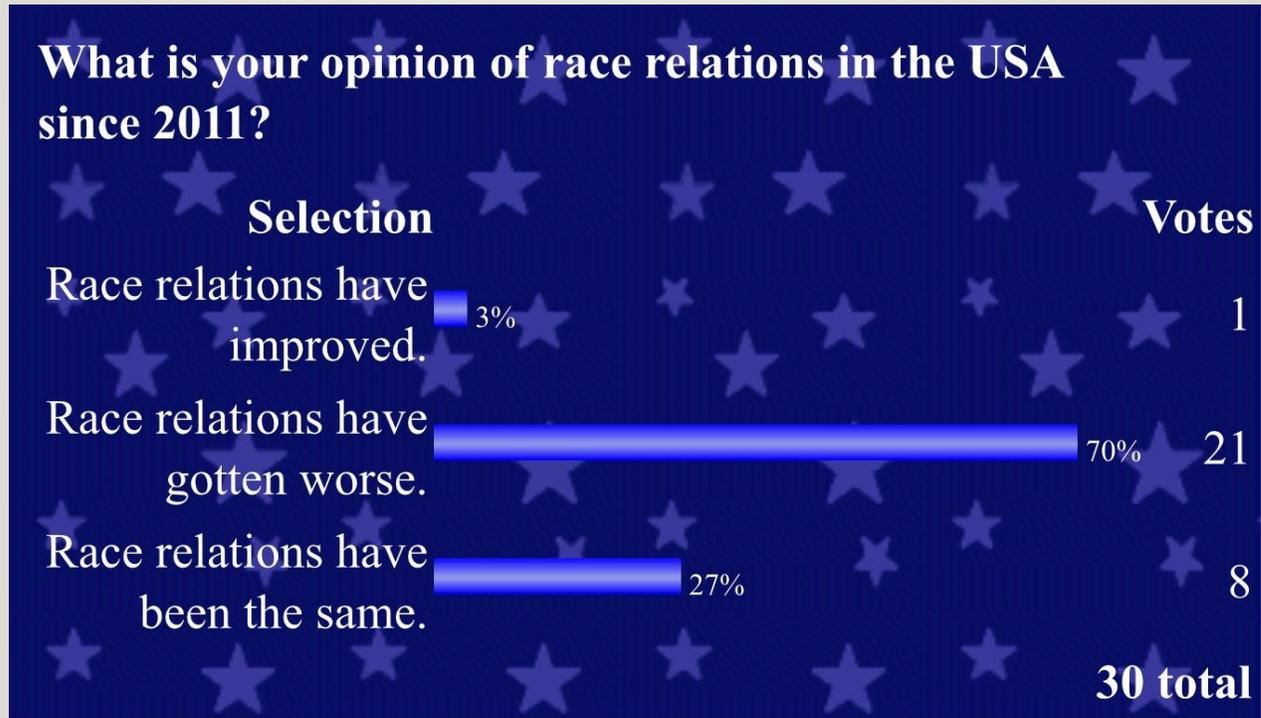
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- Videotaped murders of unarmed men Alton Sterling and Philando Castille, July 2016.
- Dallas, Texas riots led to the murder of 5 police officers, July 2016.
- San Francisco 49ers player Colin Kaepernick was criticized for not standing for the national anthem (August, 2016).
- The murder of unarmed motorist, Terence Crutcher of Tulsa Oklahoma in September 2016.
- The murder of unarmed citizen Keith Lamont Scott of Charlotte, NC, in September 2016 fueled riots.



# THE DATA SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

*JULY 4, 2016 POLL RESULTS*



# SEE NO COLOR...HEAR NO COLOR...SPEAK NO COLOR?

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- Ignoring the problem of racism is unhealthy.
- Racism is a stressor for African Americans (Clark et. al, 1999).
- Coping with racism can be either apathy or anger. Both are unhealthy (Clark & Harrell, 1982)
- Children may learn unhealthy ways to cope with racism that can impact their learning (e.g. learned helplessness)
- Unhealthy coping can impact their mental health (depression, anxiety) (West, Donovan & Roener, 2009).
- Unhealthy coping can impact their physical health (high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease) (Clark & Harrell, 1982).

SO...DISCUSSING RACE IS A GOOD THING?

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Yes!



# WHY IS STORYTELLING IMPORTANT?

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- Storytelling touches the historical cultural oral tradition, which is present in the African culture and diaspora (Banks-Wallace, 2001).
- Teaching in a culturally relevant way improves teacher bonding, student engagement, and motivation (Howard, 2001).
- Narrative therapy is a culturally relevant and effective way of processing and conceptualizing thoughts and feelings, if it reflects their culture (Herzog, 1994).
- Storytelling can improve early language, literacy, and reasoning skills when paired with a discussion (Vernon-Feagans, et al, 2001).
- Storytelling provides a format or guide for the teacher to follow about a sensitive topic.

# THE GERM: HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT RACISM AND DIVERSITY

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The Germ defines racism and describes it as a germ (sickness), not as a belief specific to any particular race.

# SECOND GRADE PILOT PROJECT



- The Germ was read to two second grade classes at an urban elementary school in Washington, DC.
- Student's were engaged in a discussion about race, racism, colorism and police interactions after the book was read.
- Teacher's were asked to rate their perceptions of the appropriateness and usefulness of the book in a 10 item questionnaire.



# TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

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- The Germ book discussion helped students understand racism and diversity.
- The Germ helped students improve their communication about racism and diversity.
- The Germ helped students discuss their feelings about racism and diversity.
- The Germ helped students identify their own experiences or news stories dealing with racism,
- The Germ helped students identify other students with different backgrounds or lifestyles.
- The discussion of The Germ helped one or more students cope with their personal experiences of racism.
- The discussion helped students improve their treatment of people from other backgrounds.
- The Germ was useful in helping identify solutions for racial problems.
- The Germ should be used in class for future discussions.
- Teachers found The Germ enjoyable, engaging, and useful for encouraging communication with students.

# RESEARCHER'S JOURNAL

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*On June 6, 2016, The Germ was read to two second grade classes at a DC Elementary School. The children were very engaged in the story. They thought the part about “raisin being confused with racism” was funny. I was surprised because the children resonated most with the page about people of African decent having the germ toward other people of African decent. Many student’s commentated when I read that page and they made comments after the story about experiencing this. The students really liked the page about the police officer named “Mr. Ramsey”. They commented on positive police officers in their communities. After the story was read, the students seemed to understand that racism is a germ that can be cured.*

# LIMITATIONS

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- Very small pilot sample size due to the frequent standardized testing and tight schedules of the teachers.
- A larger sample is needed for more meaningful data.
- This study is a very good start for more studies on storytelling with a focus on racism and diversity.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

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- Seeing color, racial or cultural differences is okay.
- Discussing race and racism is healthy and helpful.
- Using storytelling as a medium for these discussions is helpful to avoid awkwardness or saying the wrong thing.
- Allow students to discuss their experiences.
- Remind students that they are safe.
- Explain racism as a germ and not a characteristic of one or more races/cultures.
- Reflect on your privilege.
- Test yourself...if you dare! <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

# WHAT ABOUT TRAUMA?

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- Viral news of the murders of innocent African Americans is secondary trauma.
- Allow children to discuss what they know (or think they know).
- Give children the facts.
- Remind children that they are safe.

### 10 Things Every Badass Teacher Needs To Understand:

- #1 - When unarmed youth of color are killed by police it is an educational issue.
- #2 - Teachers are essential in the fight against racism.
- #3 - There is a difference between racism and prejudice that you need to understand.
- #4 - Colorblind is not the solution to dealing with racism. It's the new problem.
- #5 - People of color know more about race and racism than white people. Allow them to teach you what they know.
- #6 - The goal of social justice and multi-cultural education is not to make white people feel guilty.
- #7 - If you feel the urge to get defensive when people are talking about racism, white supremacy, white privilege, and discrimination, try being silent instead.
- #8 - White generalizations are no different than other generalizations that we all make.
- #9 - Reverse racism doesn't exist.
- #10 - White privilege does not mean that you have not worked hard in life or that you have never suffered. Each of us has some type of privilege.

~ BAT Denisha Jones



# BOOKS ABOUT RACE AND DIVERSITY

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- **“The Soccer Fence: A Story of Friendship, Hope and Apartheid in South Africa”** by Phil Bildner  
2014. Grades 1-4.
- **“Chocolate Me!”** by Taye Diggs  
2011. Grades Preschool-2.
- **“Amazing Grace”** by Mary Hoffman  
1991. Grades Preschool-2.
- **“Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?”** by Sandy Lynne Holman  
1998. Grades 1-4.
- **“Skin Again”** by Bell Hooks  
2004. Grades K-3.
- **“Let’s Talk About Race”** by Julius Lester  
2005. Grades 1-5.



For a complete list check out: <http://humaneeducation.org/blog/2014/06/26/14-childrens-picture-books-exploring-race-racism/>

# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!!

Please complete the survey!

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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