

BLACK LIVES MATTER

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



**Activities, resources and tips for families to empower children to understand
and work towards race equality**

**Adapted from guidance published by Yoopies and Stronger United,
with grateful thanks**

CONTENTS

Context and Vision	3
Introduction	3
What is the Black Lives Matter movement, and how to explain it to children	4
How do I explain George Floyd to my children?	5
How do I open a conversation with children on race and racism?	5
How do I explain White Privilege to children?	6
It's not just a story of struggle	6
My child isn't racist	7
Talking to younger children (Early Years and Key Stage 1)	7
Talking to older children and young people (Key Stage 2 and secondary)	8
Saying or doing nothing is not an option	9
Helpful links to resources for younger children	10
Helpful links to resources for key stage 2	12
Links and resources for secondary children & young people	13
Suggestions for further research and discussion	14

Context and vision:

As a family of schools, The Good Shepherd Trust's mission is to ensure the best possible outcomes for every pupil. We believe that every pupil has the right to a broad and rich education to be achieved within a distinctly Christian context, valuing each child as an individual and enabling them to flourish by discovering and developing their God given gifts. A fundamental aspect of the quality of education our schools provide, is teaching our children and young people how to stay safe and healthy, including understanding and valuing identity, respect, and difference. In our schools within The Good Shepherd Trust this is carried out within a distinctively Christian ethos, underpinned by our overarching Trust values of Trust, Love, Courage, Respect and Integrity.

A Short Introduction:

Peaceful protests, mass marches, and portrayals of violence, petitions, political speeches, and demonstrations have been high profile in our news over recent weeks, since the death of George Floyd, at the hands of police in America on May 25th 2020.

News programmes have reported on movements campaigning for an end to racial inequality on a global scale. Yet, current affairs aren't always well explained or immediately clear, especially from a child's view.



Many children may have questions about the images, stories, and conversations they hear on the news and around them. We can't solely rely on the media, social media and schools to ensure children fully understand the Black Lives Matter movement and the issues that fuel the movement. As parents, if we haven't already, it is also our responsibility to engage in positive and open discussions about race and racism with our children at home.



Perhaps race has always been a topic of regular discussion in your family, or perhaps you feel unsure about how to approach the topic of race with your family. Perhaps you grew up never talking about race, or perhaps you regularly face discrimination.

This guide aims to provide resources, advice, and tips to ensure that children are aware of racial inequality, racial hierarchies, and white privilege present in modern-day society, as well

as share tools and knowledge in which to combat racism today.

Racism and race is not a one-conversation topic, and our guide by no means contains all the answers, we simply hope to provide the foundations of good places to start help inspire discussion and empower families to work towards racial equality.

What is the Black Lives Matter Movement?

In 2012, 17-year old African-American Trayvon Martin was killed by a member of neighbourhood watch, George Zimmerman. The police told Zimmerman not to pursue Trayvon for looking suspicious, but he didn't listen and fatally shot him. There was a lot of racial bias during the trial and Zimmerman was acquitted for the crime. In response, Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was formed.

The movement seeks to "eradicate white supremacy, stop violence inflicted on Black communities, and create a safe space for Black communities, imagination, and innovation." It speaks out against police brutality, inequality and unaccountability, not solely with regard to George Floyd, but also Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the thousands of victims wrongly treated by the police. Whilst it is not a new movement, its message is central to the present anti-racist movement. The statement "Black Lives Matter" refers to a Twitter hashtag, an anthem, a slogan, a social movement, or movements and groupings for racial justice. It has grown to become a global movement - an international human rights movement - to combat racism in modern-day society.

But how do we explain this to our children?

When we explain BLM to children, we're not saying that nobody else matters. However, if we say 'all lives matter', as parents we risk taking away the real inequality and disadvantage lived and felt by Black and minority ethnic communities.

There are child-friendly analogies to help children understand Black Lives Matter:

- *Imagine if you broke your leg and had to go to the Doctor. You would want to tell the Doctor that right now, your leg was in pain. Whilst ALL your bones matter, right now, it's your leg that needs attention.*
- *Imagine you were running a race to raise money at a cancer fundraiser, and someone said to you 'But don't all diseases matter?' Of course they do, but right now, it's cancer that needs funding.*



We said: Black Lives Matter

We never said: Only Black lives matter

We know: that all lives matter

**We just need your help with
#BlackLivesMatter**

Because Black lives are in danger!



How do I explain the news about George Floyd to my children?

Incidents of bad behaviour and mistreatment have happened regularly for decades, and no matter how many times people said ‘stop’ or asked for help, the changes to policy and equality law made too little difference to people’s attitudes and behaviour. George Floyd’s death prompted a fresh global outcry of ‘enough is enough’.

Perhaps, prior to the death of George Floyd, people viewed racism as something ‘of the past’ or ‘something that doesn’t happen here.’ When talking about the tragedy of George Floyd and similar incidents, it’s important to emphasise that racism hasn’t suddenly appeared from nowhere. There are good factual and story books that help explain the history and key events that have led to our society today, and how we protect against, and respond to racism, particularly in schools. (see a list and links to some of the titles at the end of this guide)

How do I start a conversation with children on race and racism?

For some families discussions on race and racial inequality may feel like fairly new territory. It can be easy to get used to not thinking about racial identity and equality if it doesn’t personally impact us negatively during everyday life.

Recent events have reminded us that parents and carers must play an integral role in ensuring children have an accurate, informed understanding of white privilege, racial bias and racial hierarchies evident in our society and the ways we can combat racism.

It’s quite natural to feel uncomfortable as a parent when engaging in such discussions, especially when it’s not a topic that you’re used to talking about. That discomfort reminds us that there is inequality and unfairness. As author Jemar Tisby says:

“The worst conversation adults can have with kids about race is no conversation at all. Talking to kids about race needs to happen early, often and honestly.” (See video link at the end of this guide to hear more.)

And, as Ijeoma Oluo, the author of “So You Want to Talk About Race” tells us:

“If you’re white, and you don’t want to feel any of that pain by having these conversations, then you are asking people of colour to continue to bear the entire burden of racism alone.”

Teacher, and author of ‘No Outsiders’, Andrew Moffat says:

“In 2020 we cannot sit on the fence when it comes to the teaching of equality, nor can we pick and choose which aspects of equality we feel comfortable with”.

Make sure you have a confident and accurate understanding of these topics yourself before approaching them with your children. There is a range of helpful resources at the end of this guide.



How do I explain White Privilege to children?

It's important to understand, and to explain to our children, that the concept of white privilege is not an attack on white people, but is a reflection of the reality that many communities across the world are affected by. As an individual, we can't eradicate it completely from society as it is deeply ingrained into many of our systems and institutions.

However, the biggest first step we can take is to recognise that it exists and then to reflect upon how that impacts ourselves and others in our immediate and wider circles. Understanding the origins and the history of white privilege, which dates back to the colonial era and has continued and evolved throughout more recent history, is equally as important and allows us to identify how we can change our individual actions to uplift those who might not have the same privileges as others.

Remember, it's not just a story of struggle:

As parents, whilst it is important to understand and explain the importance of racism both today and throughout history, it is equally important to celebrate the many achievements, contributions from Black and Minority Ethnic communities throughout history, without focussing just on a story of struggle.

We can enrich our children's lives through introducing different cuisines, Black authors, musicians, and help our children celebrate diversity, and explore new perspectives, ideas and culture.

As well as this, we can and should recognise the contributions that Black inventors, scientists and politicians have made towards many of the modern-day amenities that are used everyday, giving them the credit that's well deserved. While Thomas Edison is renowned for inventing the lightbulb, few people know that it was actually an African American inventor, Lewis Latimer, who invented the carbon filament that allows the bulb to function. Other inventions which were pioneered or greatly improved by Black inventors include the three-light traffic light system (Garrett Morgan, 1923), refrigerated trucks (Frederick McKinley Jones, 1940) and the first colour PC monitor (Mark Dean, 1980).

Black history goes beyond slavery. The ethnic heritage and contributions of our communities is something valuable that's worth exploring and helps us to acknowledge that they are multidimensional, beautiful and inspirational with many positive elements. It's also valuable to encourage children to research who is making history today.



But my child isn't racist....

Many parents may shy away from discussions of race, because 'my kids wouldn't behave like this.' However, there is still plenty your children can do to ensure that school, playgrounds, and activities are inclusive, respectful and fair. Even if you think your kids wouldn't personally engage in racist behaviour, there are still things they can do to help.

Encouraging our children to speak up and stand up to inequality and racism is not asking your child to fully understand exactly what it feels like to experience discrimination or inequality. Rather as parents we should be helping them to learn to take on and understand the struggle as if it were their own.



As our children grow up, we should be encouraging them to be open to listening, to embrace independent learning opportunities, and to be prepared to alter their perspectives, thinking and behaviour. As parents, we must be careful not to pass on the idea that every minority group feels oppressed, rather we should encourage our children to speak out against injustice, be proactive learners and positively alter implicit bias.

Inspire your children to be brave and speak out to their teachers, their friends, their parents, and figures of authority in cases of injustice. Encourage them to be curious and to question their own prejudice or the prejudice present in school or activities.

Talking to younger children:

Explaining recent events and the deep complexities racism pose are understandably difficult to approach with younger children. How do we explain race and the racism that exists today in an age-appropriate manner?

A good first step is to frame race and its present inequalities through the lens of how a child experiences the world, such as 'fairness.' From an early age, we hear our children say 'it's not fair.' Highlighting examples of situations that 'are not fair' and 'are fair' is a tangible lens in which young children are able to better understand racial injustice.

For example: How would your child feel if their friend said something mean to them or pushed them because of something they couldn't control? What if they then did it again, even after he/she asked them to stop? And how would it feel if no one at school helped them? Eventually, they would feel upset and angry. In some ways, this is like the George Floyd tragedy.



Use simple language and make it clear that you feel the treatment of George Floyd by a police officer was not fair, that police officers should be kind and helpful, and that in our family we

think everyone should be treated fairly. Personalising your explanation will help make it more tangible, and if you can relate the discussion either to yourselves, your children's friends or your own family members and friends, it can help to bring these topics closer to home to highlight their importance.

Children absorb their surroundings from a young age, therefore as parents, we can also actively expose our children to diverse books, toys, films, cartoons, and music to ensure our children do not associate influential heroes, the most 'beautiful' princesses, or the loudest voices as solely white. Question and discuss with children whether representation seems fair in films, books and in friendship groups or social situations.

This can also be a good time to teach children about prejudice and that we should never judge a person by their colour, family background, abilities, or by their physical appearance. Often in our society, there are presumptions of what a 'dangerous' person looks like, which has resulted in unfair treatment. We should remind our children that a person with a darker skin colour should not be associated with negative characteristics such as being dangerous or unkind.

Talking with older children (KS2 and secondary school):

With a greater understanding of the world and events around them, we can expand on the above to teach our older children the history of race and racial injustice present in modern-day society. We should make sure our children understand that the effects of the slave trade did not stop at its abolition, but its effects are still seen and felt today.

Most older children have an awareness of what is going on in the world around them. As parents we should, therefore, allow our children to lead the conversation by providing a safe and comfortable environment in which they are able to express themselves and explore different perspectives and develop empathy.

It's important to know about current injustices, previous injustices, and cases in which people have bravely spoken out. See the suggestions at the end of this guide.



Saying or doing nothing is not an option:

Often, we are so afraid of saying the ‘wrong thing’ that we don’t engage at all. As a consequence, our children don’t learn about the racism that exists today, how to keep themselves and their friends safe, and how to be open to different perspectives or how to reshape their views. We can also make an active effort to encourage discussion on race. If we immediately shut down our children’s remarks or comments on race, we risk making it into a taboo topic. With good research and background reading, maybe researching together with our children, we can support them to become active participants in making positive change.

Invite children to actively see race, difference, culture, to see history, and to acknowledge that race has an impact on people’s life experiences.



Helpful links to resources:

Here are just a few resources to help discussion and support children's understanding. There are many, many more resources online.

[Amazon](#) has a selection of children's books addressing race and diversity.

[The Book Trust](#) also has an excellent selection of children's books to support discussions about BLM

[Letterbox Library](#) is a useful one-stop-shop for books addressing equality matters, including race and Black History, for young children (annual £5 membership fee).

Have a meaningful discussion about the characters and the situations in the stories, and about the challenges we're currently facing. Here's a few questions that we hope will help:

- What issues did Black and Minority Ethnic people face in this story?
- How did the main character(s) feel / respond?
- Was this the right or wrong approach? Why?
- How would you respond in this situation?
- What lesson did you learn about the issues we're seeing today?



For suggestions of leading Black and Minority Ethnic people in the UK visit [100 Great Black Britons](#) – there is even a home-schooling competition for children and young people to enter (closing date 30th September 2020)

Young Children (2+ years)

How to [Talk to Kids About Race](#) October 2018, is a helpful guide for parents on the importance of starting conversations about race with young children.

For a more complete guide to addressing racism with very young children, including references to storybooks, factual books, activities and video links see [Raising Little Allies To Be](#) by Lucy Song (2020)

CBBC tackles a range of identity and wellbeing issues in their [Bugbears](#) clips, including the views of young children on racism.

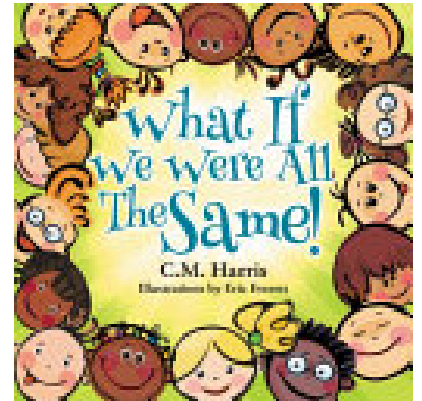
[Blue Peter](#) also broadcast a very helpful explanation and other resources to empower children to help stop racism.



[‘Race Cars’](#) by Jenny Devenny is a children’s book explaining white privilege, with discussion guide for parents.

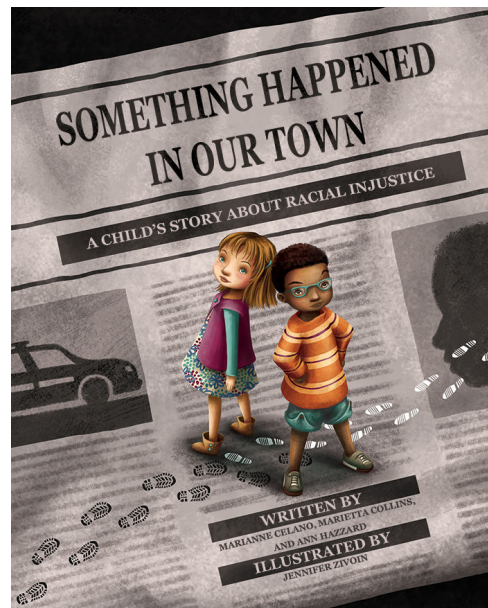
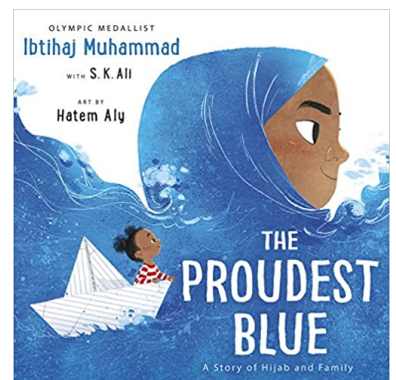
[What if We Were All The Same](#) by C M Harris helps children understand that there is nothing wrong with being different.

[Making a Difference](#) by Cheri Meiners, assures children that they are important, and that what they do matters. It is a book that can help build social skills and character, and teach life lessons, such as kindness, courtesy, respect, and purpose.



[The Proudest Blue](#) by Ibtihaj Muhammad is a story of new experiences and of being proud of who you are, from Olympic medallist Ibtihaj Muhammad.

[Something Bad Happened in our Town](#) by Ann Hazard & Marietta Collins, explains the history of racism, and the current BLM from the perspectives of a white family. The story is told in UK accents in the [video](#).

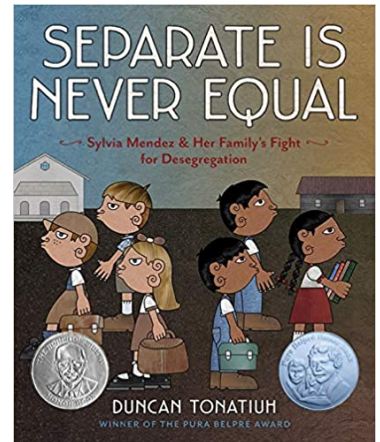


Discussion pieces and books for Key Stage 2 pupils:

[BBC Newsround](#) has a lot of excellent video clips and [fact-file explanations](#), including UK children talking about their experience of racism, and how the death of George Floyd has affected their lives in Britain.

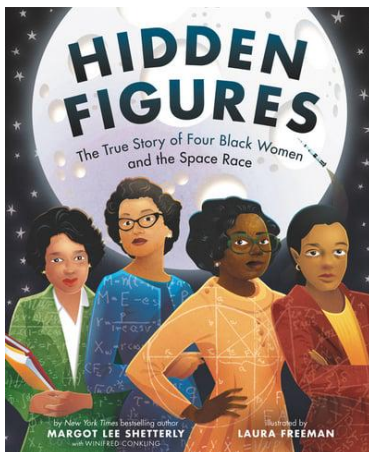
[BBC Newsbeat](#) also has suggestions for a different perspective on Britain's Black History, ranging from Roman remains with African ancestry, to the first Black voters.

[Momma, Have You Heard The News](#) by Sanya Whittaker Gragg is a challenging picture books for 8+ years on talking about Race and the police



[Kids talk about segregation at school in the USA](#) May 2016, is a useful discussion piece about inclusion and difference

[Separate is Never Equal](#) by Duncan Tonatiuh tells the true story of Sylvia Méndez and her parents who helped end school segregation in California.



Watch the film '[Hidden Figures](#)' (2016), the true story about the contribution of segregated Black women to the American Space Race. This has also now been adapted to a [book](#) for readers of 8-12 year olds.

Discussion Activity:

- Why are people protesting about statues and wanting them to be removed?
- What do you think should be done with the statues, and why?
- Who would you nominate to have a statue in 2020?



Discussion pieces for secondary pupils:

[racism and white privilege in the UK](#) June 2020, Buzzfeed UK, a news interview with young people discussing life in the UK today.

[President Obama speech about race relations in the USA](#) January 2017

[Your Lives Matter](#): Barack Obama offers words of hope, June 2020

[How to Make this Moment the Turning Point for Real Change](#), June 2020, Barack Obama explores the right to protest, and the need to participate to achieve institutional, political and international change.

Activity: research the different reporting styles of different newspapers and online newsfeeds for the same story. How does reporting underpin and promote different perspectives, views and political standpoints? How do reporters use language and style to prompt emotive responses from readers? What impact might this have on society, community inclusion, respect for others, equality and antiracist movements?



Other significant historical and events and figures to research together and inform discussions (not an exhaustive list):

- Apartheid and the role of Nelson Mandela in South Africa
- Martin Luther King
- Malcom X
- Rosa Parks
- The story of Windrush, and the government's response to the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, March 2020
- The American Civil War
- The history and abolishment of slavery
- 1919 Race Riots in Britain after WW1
- The Grenfell Tower Enquiry

