



## WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

# What is White Privilege, Really?

### STEF

Alright, yeah. Hey, this is Stef, so thanks for being here for “What Is White Privilege Really?” webinar. I’m Stef Bernal-Martinez. I’m a teaching and learning specialist here at Teaching Tolerance. I’m a queer Chicana from the West Texas Borderlands and I use she and her pronouns. I’m going to start off just by sharing who my people are so you know a little bit about what I’m about. My people are educators and [inaudible]. They’re organizers and working class folks and queer folks, and all of y’all too. So I’m going to invite our guest, Rhonda to introduce herself. And so Rhonda, can you also share your name and your work and your pronouns and who your people are?

### RONDA

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Ronda Taylor Bullock and I am the Co-founder and Director of We Are, which stands for working to extend antiracist education. As a nonprofit organization, we provide anti-racism training to children, parents, guardians, and educators. We use a three-pronged approach to dismantle systemic racism in education and beyond through offering summer camps for kids and rising first through fifth grade, professional development for teachers and educators and workshops for parents. My pronouns are she, her and hers. I am a mother scholar. My partner Kelvin and I have a son and daughter, Zion and Zaire [?]. We’re working, living and growing in Durham, but I’m originally from Gulf, North Carolina, a small rural town. And my people are educators, activists, people who are committed to doing the tough work of fighting systemic racism in education and beyond.

### STEF

Cool. Thank you, Ronda.

### RONDA

Thank you, Stef.

### STEF

I think lot of folks are introducing themselves in a moment. I’ll ask y’all to do that a little more formally in the chatbox, but first I’m going to share a little bit about our work at Teaching Tolerance and then a little about how to use this platform if you’ve never used it before. So here at Teaching Tolerance, our mission is to provide schools with the resources they need to educate for a diverse democracy. And in addition to the webinars like this one, we offer professional development workshops and a free print publication and completely free classroom curriculum and tools available on our website at tolerance.org. Okay, so a little bit about the platform. You’ll want to keep these slides widgets -- the slides widget open as we go throughout the webinar. You’ll see the slides and you’ll hear our voices and you will notice a widget dock at the bottom of your screen.

**STEF**

So any of these icons can be opened, closed, moved or resized. And please use the group chat widget for public discussion with audience members. But if you do have a technical difficulty or have like a content question for Ronda or I, you can those privately into the Q&A widget. We'll address questions at the end during the Q&A session. Also, please be sure to download materials related to the webinar. In the resource list. I have lots of really, really good stuff for you all there. Little Audre Lorde, little Melissa Harris Perry. So make sure you check that out. And then you'll receive a prompt to complete a brief post event survey when the webinar is over, and if you can complete that, that we would really appreciate it. And then also, make sure you download the certificate of completion for your professional portfolio. The certificate is available for download at the end of the webinar and will show up in the certification widget at the bottom of your screen. All right. Almost done with all the technical stuff. So finally, everything you see here today will be available on demand about one hour after this webinar, and that includes everything that's said in this chat window. So simply log back in using the same link or access all of our webinars on our website. All right? Okay.

**STEF**

All right, so today we have this really big and beautiful vision for today's webinar. Ronda and I planned this together and we're really excited that you're here with us. So together, these are things we want to do. We want to expand our definition of white privilege as both personal and systemic. We want to understand the function of whiteness as a tiller of white supremacy and power and we also want to reaffirm our commitment to anti-racist education and we want to invite students into the work of anti-racist education. So that's our job here today.

**RONDA**

Also, I am excited about the conversation we are about to have, Stef with all of the people out there. And can you all introduce yourself in the chatbox with your name, pronouns, and one reason why you're here with us today.

**STEF**

I know there's a lot of folks online, so I'm just going to let you all do that for just a second. And then I'm going to move on, but it's good to see so many people from different parts of the country here. Cool. Awesome. All right. So we're going to get started. Thanks for introducing yourself. All right. So when we talk about white privilege, very often we will like you'll hear folks talk about Peggy McIntosh and that really classic essay, "The Invisible Knapsack." She's an anti-racism researcher and activist and she published a guide in 1988 and that lots of us have become familiar with now. And this started to become a really useful tool for helping us understand how white privilege manifests in our daily lives. So in that essay, she outlines these personal and tangible benefits of whiteness and some of those examples you might have heard already, like you go to the grocery store and if you go to like buy some bandages and you're likely to find bandages that match your skin color and usually they're called flesh colored, right?

**STEF**

Or you can be sure that like curriculum materials that your children get in schools will talk about the existence of their race and all the accomplishments that your people have contributed to. And then -- or like this is one I like think about a lot is like you can be late to a meeting without having the lateness re-

flect on your entire race, so you're not the representative for your entire race. So like as we build fluency with the language of white privilege and with the personal impacts of this privilege, sometimes we can get lost in the bigger picture and we lose sight of the relationship between personal privileges, like all the ones I just talked about and systemic power. So we're going to talk through the language that we hear in these kinds of conversations about white privilege. Sometimes we hear words like bias or race or racism, and sometimes we use all of these words interchangeably, right? And then sometimes the way that we use these important words start turning into like just meaningless jargon. And so we're going to return to these words and find some working definitions. We're going to try to find some meaning to the work of unpacking white privilege and the work of anti-racism and the practice of anti-racist education. So as we talk about these words, I'm going to turn it over to Ronda to lead us through this conversation.

#### **RONDA**

Okay. So one of the -- two of the terms that you want to help us to distinguish are bias and racism. Now, I didn't create these definitions, but biases are people's prejudiced beliefs about individuals or groups of people based on their identity and racism -- it's a quote from sociologist, Matthew Clair, and Jeffrey S. Is individual -- so racism is individual and group level processes and structures that are implicated in the reproduction of racial inequality. So those are two terms that we're going to be playing around today; bias and racism. We're also going to talk about systemic racism and this happens when racism functions through systems. When structures or processes are called out by groups with power or carried out by groups with power such as government, businesses or schools, it's used as a weapon to uphold white supremacy. Something else that I want us to think about too in this conversation is that racial bias informed racism, right? And so it's the prejudiced beliefs about groups of people that informed the racism because racism in itself is an act.

#### **STEF**

Totally.

#### **RONDA**

Oh, go ahead, Stef.

#### **STEF**

No, yeah, totally. I just -- I think I really was appreciating that the fact that we're trying to emphasize that this is the way that white power, white privilege works is the relationship between what you just described, like the systemic racism and then like all of these racial bias, like personal preference, things like that and how they work together.

#### **RONDA**

Yes, and thank you for emphasizing that. So then we're also going to think about the word why. You know, in our society we are so comfortable labeling and talking about black and brown folks. But people have such discomfort using white in reference to race and so we're going to try to unpack that a little bit too. And then we want to look at the word privilege. Privilege as we're going to be using it today means access to benefits or advantages that may be unearned.

**RONDA**

So as we're moving forward and thinking about what white privilege is, I just wanted to share that as an organization we are, we host a three-day educated institute in the summer and we do a skit called "White Privilege Is and White Privilege Is Not", and to mitigate the immediate defensiveness that white people often experience when hearing this term. So, for example, when we set this up, we say that white privilege is not the suggestion that whites do not have suffering in their lives. That's one of the common misconceptions that can often be awkward and especially if you're a person who is white and growing up in poverty, calling that privilege definitely, you know, causes one to pause. White privilege is not being necessarily richer or more successful than people of color. White people with privilege can live in poverty or live in areas without access to healthcare facilities or live in food deserts.

**RONDA**

So that's not what it means to have white privilege. Also, it does not mean that [inaudible] in freedom of oppression or the white people come from Leave-It-To-Beaver type home, you know, to use an outdated reference. But we're really trying to clarify, you know, what we're trying to say and that what white privilege is not. And it's not an assumption that everything a white person has accomplished is unearned. Many white people who have reached a high level of success have worked extremely hard to get there. And so we really just want to try to clarify that before moving on with the conversation.

**STEF**

Thank you Ronda. And so when we -- while we were trying to work through this definition, this author and scholar Frances Kendall tries to help us think about white privilege and I'm quoting her in this moment -- quoting them in this moment "Having great -- white privilege is having greater access to power and resources than people of color do in the same exact situation", right? So this resistant and understanding that accounts for like both the conscious and unconscious acts that we talked about with Peggy Mackintosh and then it connects those personal acts to historical inequity. So it's not just your daily life privilege, like the example we gave about the Band-Aids, but how it connects to historical inequity. So when working in anti-bias and anti-racist professional learning communities, I get this question that comes up a lot and people often say -- folks will often say, well, like how come it's not racist if a black person does it?

**STEF**

So like a white person does something and they're told like that's like a racist act, so like, and then they'll often come back with that question. And an example I try to talk through with folks is, so in my first grade class, I had a white student who frequently touched and commented on another student's hair, black students' hair and the act itself is seemingly very innocuous. I think that young children are simply learning about bodies and are learning about personal space. And the white thing to me wasn't necessarily trying to be -- wasn't being racist and wasn't trying to be hurtful, but the act of touching and commenting on black hair, on black children's hair, on black girls' hair does not exist in a vacuum, right? So in this example, I intervened using an approach about boundaries and consent. So I really -- the conversation I just had to have with the white student was like, this is a space bubble.

**STEF**

Like I think all teachers have had that conversation with young people. Like this is my space, that is your space, things like that. And my decision to have this conversation was informed by my understanding that there are power differentials between students based off of race and so in the exact same situation, there is a difference between a white child experiencing that and a black child. So I don't want any child to have their hair touched and commented on without their consent, but I also know that the experience of black students being touched and commented on is different of white students and has a historical legacy if we think about what has happened throughout the history of our country, right?

**RONDA**

Yeah. And that links in to our like personal actions and choices are rooted in historical legacy and we can't lose sight of the larger context in which we live. We need a working understanding of how white privilege functions so that we can lead effective anti-racist education and having that history is key component.

**STEF**

Absolutely. So in our particular cultural and political context, we have to talk about whiteness as power. So when we say white privilege, we're talking about power, real power plays out everyday. So whiteness can be that invisible knapsack of privileges that Peggy Mackintosh had wrote about and it can also be a weapon. So we're going to briefly dive into three common powers that are afforded to people who benefit from whiteness. And you don't have to strictly be an affluent white man to benefit from these powers. You know, for me myself as a nonblack, nonwhite, Latinx person, I benefit for whiteness depending on my context and right now for the purposes of this webinar, I won't divulge into the complexity of like race and Latinidad in this moment, but we do have a webinar on February 12th that will dive into those questions. So if you're interested in about that, talking about Latinx people and race, look out for that idea. Oh and just a side note, in case if you have no idea what I mean when I say Latinidad, I'm talking about the racially diverse group of people who are often grouped together because of a shared geographical ancestry. All right. So the three powers that we're going to talk about today are the power of normal, the power of the benefit of the doubt, and the power of accumulated power.

**RONDA**

So when we are speaking about power of normal, that means that the way you exist and move about in the world is seen as the norm and what's to be expected. On quite a few occasions, I've asked white people to talk about white culture and oftentimes they would struggle with this question, which I'm thinking could be simple, but they would say answers such as it just is or this is just the way I live and it's been normalized. And so oftentimes when people think it's just the way we are, this is just the way we exist, that renders their identity and their cultural invisible. And so scholar, Cheryl Harris mentioned this in her seminal piece "Whiteness As Property" and in somewhat simple terms, the subtle versions of white privilege are often used as a comfortable, easy way, entry point for people who might push back against the concept. And so when you're being accepted as normal, oftentimes you don't have to think about the way you move about in the world.

**RONDA**

And so there are a few examples to include. Some that Stef had mentioned earlier about, you know, the flesh-colored Band-Aid or go into a grocery store and looking for a card and finding that your culture is represented in the card section and so it just seems like it just is. And for other people, they are [inaudible] and for white people they get to pass through the world as if you know, it's normal that to see only my culture represented in these different spaces. But the roots of these problems is often ignored. These types of examples can be dismissed by white people who might say, my hair is curly and requires a special products or my family is from Poland and it's hard to find traditional Polish food at the grocery store and that may be true. But the reasons even for these simple white privileges need to be recognized is that the damage goes beyond the inconvenience of shopping for goods and services.

**RONDA**

These privileges are symbolic of what we might call the power of normal. And so at public spaces and goods being catered to one race and segregate the needs of people of other races into special section, that indicates something beneath the surface. Even myself, I can remember as a child going to look for hair care products in the grocery store and recognizing that what I needed was on the same aisle as pet and animal food. And so there's a subliminal messages being communicated to me about my hair type versus the hair type for the people whose products are on the aisle with the other hair care material. And so people of color move through the world knowing their needs are on the margin. Recognizing this means recognizing where the gaps exist.

**STEF**

Absolutely. Thank you for sharing those particular anecdotes, Ronda. I really appreciate your vulnerability.

Ronda: Thank you. I appreciate that. And so part of doing this work is sharing our stories and I think that contributes, you know, the significance and the vulnerability of myself and others being able to have authentic conversations and I believe it helps us to move this work forward. Another thing that we're going to be focused on is the power of the benefit of doubt. And this is a really strong one which could seem minor when we're just talking about it, but we can look to current viral moments and observe the power of the benefit of doubt. So for example, start with the incident that happened in Starbucks with the two black men who had come in and were waiting for clients before they ordered. And so they were presumed to be guilty of just being present of [inaudible] or maybe trying to take advantage of the situation.

Ronda: And they were -- the police were called on them and they were arrested and taken out. They were not granted the benefit of doubt. We have other examples when we think about barbecue Becky, which happened in Oakland. Another much stronger example, which I think even in those instances, you know, they're powerful and they're traumatic, but if we take it and zoom out a little bit and think about the context, people just existing and walking out in the danger when you're not granted benefit of the doubt, in particular, when we think about the murder of Trayvon Martin and what it meant for George Zimmerman to encounter him in the dark and he wasn't given the benefit of doubt as if he was just a young child who had went to the store to get something to drink and have some snacks. He was presumed guilty. He was presumed to be a criminal. And that in itself costs in his life. So this idea that



benefit of the doubt is really something that is powerful. It can operate on a seemingly insignificant level. And then on some levels, it can operate in a way that causes a significant harm and loss of life for black and brown folks.

Stef: Yeah. I think this for me, this what you shared reminds me that like this is not just a simple daily like a simple, like I went to the grocery store, but this like literally can be the difference between life and death like literally, and I think that's -- yeah, I think that's a really important takeaway for me, Ronda.

Ronda: And when we think about white people's skin tone, when they're having those instances where something, a misstep happens to them, they can be assured that their skin color, their skin tone will not be a reason people hesitate to trust them or to extend some courtesy to them. If white people are accused of a crime, they're less likely to be presumed guilty, less likely to be sentenced to death and more likely to be portrayed in a fair and nuanced manner by media. And I think that's what the social media campaign #IfTheyGunMeDown was a part of making visible for folks because again, when your way of existing in this world is normalized, it becomes invisible, that privilege becomes invisible.

Stef: Absolutely. So we've been talking about the different ways that these power show up and one of the things that I've been working on recently is diving into the understanding of the power of accumulated power. So in some ways the power of accumulated wealth and access. And so these are some of the questions that have to be considered when we talk about these privileges and powers that are afforded to people who can access whiteness, right? So we have to constantly be thinking about who built that system. So like who built a system that people who access whiteness benefit from, and then who keeps it going. So one of the things that I've been studying right now is when we talk about the net worth gap, so like accumulated wealth between white people and people of color, things that cannot exclusively remedy that gap or things like college degrees and higher salaries, and there's a reason for that.

Stef: And the reason is because of like the history behind that wealth accumulation. So the gap instead relies largely on inheritance. So wealth that's passed on from generation to generation to generation. And that wealth often comes in the form of things like inherited homes with value and when white families are able to accumulate wealth because of their earning power or their home value, they're more likely to be able to support their children into early adulthood. So helping with things like college education, first cars and first homes and so on and so forth. And this one, Ronda, you're welcome to jump in it like if you want to share anything about this, but I think this one gets really complicated when we talk about white folks who don't necessarily benefit from like wealth and capital, but I want to name a couple of things that is really important that we understand the way that the system has structured it so that even for white people who don't have wealth, they still benefit from the system.

Stef: So, an example, I was reading, Richard Rothstein's book "The Color Of Law", and he outlines the history of how institutional government policy and private entities would work in tandem, like they work together pretty explicitly to advantage white wealth accumulation. So some of the examples he talks about and he goes as far back as like talking about sharecropping systems that undermined black autonomy and to advantage white farmers. So he roots us in that history and then he goes on to really outline how the GI Bill excluded African Americans from so many of the things that white people could benefit from. One of those examples were that African Americans were kept from attending to four-year institutions. So white GIs would come back from the war and have access to a four-year institution, the

same folks who are African American did not have access. And they are pushed into trade schools and then on top of being pushed into trade schools, they were also excluded -- pushed into jobs where they were excluded from union protection. So it's just like one step after the other, boom, boom, boom. Folks who don't benefit from whiteness are constantly put in a position where they can't accumulate that wealth. They can't accumulate that power. But that's like a quick piece from that book. Also just be on the lookout for some forthcoming resources on teaching about the accumulation of white wealth and power and the Color Of Law because he will be putting those out soon.

Ronda: And Stef, I want to just add in that another great resource is a short documentary. Well, it's multi-series documentary but you can watch it in segments. It's called "Race - The Power Of An Illusion" and there's a particular segment called "The House We Live In" and it's specifically in a very concrete way help viewers understand how the GI Bill, how redlining were examples of systemic racism that created an avenue for white soldiers to come home and have access to buying homes in a good neighborhood which allows them, again, to what you had already mentioned, build the wealth, build the capital and while white families homes and neighborhoods would be invested in, black homes and black and brown communities will be in divested in. So as one was being uplifted, another one was being debased and pushed down.

Stef: Absolutely. Thank you for sharing that. Ronda, can you share again the name of that resource?

Ronda: Yes, it's a documentary series, it's called "Race - The power Of An Illusion" and the specific segment that I'm mentioning is "The House We Live In."

Stef: Okay, cool. And then I see a couple of folks are asking about the title of the book I was talking about and it's called the "Color Of Law", so hopefully, folks can catch that. All right, so we just talked about these three powers, and we're going to move in a little bit of a interaction right now. We're going to be talking about how we can reaffirm our commitment to this work, right? So we're all on this call because we're either educators, we work with young people or students, and we're trying to do this very critical work. So we're going to switch gears for a little bit.

Ronda: Okay. So we will review four considerations as we continuously develop our anti-racist practice and reaffirm our commitment to anti-racist education.

Stef: So these considerations help us analyze and navigate whiteness and the privileges that are afforded by whiteness and they can also be applied to other situations where we might benefit from personal and systemic power. I know that I keep saying this, but please remember, remember, remember that it's both -- it's a relationship, right? It's personal and systemic. And then during this whole -- during this little section, we'll be asking y'all to reflect and to share in the chatbox. So y'all are doing this work and we want to like hear about the work that you're doing. And so we'll be asking you to share.

Stef: All right. So this first consideration is navigating discomfort. So while we do this work, how we commit to this work is we don't take it personally and we don't use this comfort as an excuse to disengage from the work. So whether it's talking about whiteness or a class access or other personal and systemic powers, we have probably all had moments of discomfort, right? I'm pretty sure. So early in my journey



and my teaching practice, I have had so much confusion in talking about -- and I used this example earlier in talking about race and Latinidad and one way that I've learned to navigate my discomfort is by trying to learn my role in this work. So we all have a role and that role can shift from time to time and I navigate my discomfort when I don't understand something by knowing what my place is and now you can find this resource in the resources list, but I recently read an article, an essay by Deepa Iyer and it's called "Saying Goodbye To The Seesaw of Outrage and Numbness", and in it she describes how some of us are frontline responders and others of us are bridge builders or disruptors, but her point is that we all have a role and this is the one way that we can navigate our discomfort by having a sense of who we are and what we're about and how we move forward. And again, the link to the article is in the resources if you want to dive into that, Ronda.

Ronda: Yeah. In our training that we do with educators and even with parents too, we encourage participants to check your defensiveness or check our defensiveness. And one of the ways we talk about doing that is to pinpoint your discomfort by rubbing your ears, tapping or pressing down to feel the weight of your body. This is also something that I've taken from different counselors and people who have worked with kids and in therapy sessions. It really just makes you feel grounded and take a moment, ask yourself, what about this conversation is making me uncomfortable? We encourage folks to lean into discomfort and not pull back because that's the place where the transformational learning occurs, so pause, listen, pinpoint that discomfort in your body and then ask yourself, what about this is making me uncomfortable? Are there actions that I can take to help this situation? So these are other ways you can navigate dealing with the discomfort that comes along with having these conversations. So in the chat box, please share your strategy for navigating discomfort in these situations.

Stef: There's a lot of folks on this webinar today and so if I can pull out a few, I'll try, but we'll see. Let me see if I -- yeah, lots of folks there, chiming in with the mindfulness is a great way to navigate discomfort, lots of listening, pausing, taking deep breaths. I really appreciate, Ronda, the pieces around are like being grounded in our physical body. I think that's such a critical piece of navigating discomfort. Yeah, lots of folks sharing really good stuff. Okay. So I'm going to move on to the next consideration and how we do this work, right? So listen, amplify and speak up, right? So when black people and people of color speak to their experiences of oppression, it's important for white people to listen to those experiences and amplify that message. So some of the ways that you can do that, for example, are you can share the work and perspectives of black people and people of color on social media.

Stef: So many of my educator friends and folks that I've worked with are on social media following different like folks who are popular in the Ed world. So being mindful of who you're following, make sure you're taking cues and learning from black folks and people of color and then sharing their work in their content. And then making sure that you credit colleagues for their ideas. So like, in your both your personal spaces and on your social media spaces, like making sure that we like source the idea that's how you amplify this workup and take cues from people who are leading the work like Ronda as someone who is leading this work that's really incredible. And then one more thing that I just want to point out as a skill is serial testimony and I actually learned this through a PD with SpiritHouse in Durham, North Carolina, but it's the practice of being able to sit and listen to colleague, a peer, a friend without necessarily commenting or using your body to comments. So no body language, it's like active listening. And it's just like -- it's a little activity you can do both just like sit down and face each other and answer a question. And you can learn more about it. I resourced -- I put it in the resource list, but practicing serial testimony can really help with learning how to listen and amplifying speak-up to other folks. So in the chatbox, again, you all can share some of the things that you all are already doing. I know you all have ideas about how you amplify the perspectives of black folks and people of color or share about how you amplify the perspectives of folks who don't benefit from the same powers and privileges that you may

benefit from. So if there are folks of color on this call, if they're black folks, like how do you amplify the work who may, from folks who don't necessarily share your same power? I don't know, do you see any of those responses, Rhonda? Do you see any cool ones?

Ronda: Yes I can see them.

Stef: Yeah, using folks of color in your classrooms, visual imagery. Yeah. These are great.

Ronda: And going along with the visual imagery suggestion, showing students the pictures of the authors. Quick story. Going through school, I oftentimes unknowingly assume that whoever wrote what we were reading was white just because that had been my experience. And so I think it's important that as we're pulling from diverse authors and they're sharing their authentic experiences, it's important to show pictures of the authors to kind of challenge maybe some of the norms we may have created or that students may have been used to, to let them know there are diverse people contributing to the work that we share in the classroom.

Stef: Absolutely. Thank you.

Ronda: There is also need for white -- oh, sorry, go ahead, Stef.

Stef: No, no, no. Yeah, I think, yeah, I think that's important. And you can keep going.

Ronda: Okay. There's a need for white people and people who may benefit from personal plus systemic powers to speak of. And so here's some of the ways that you can practice doing that. If you hear racist remarks, say something. I often hear educators say that they don't want to offend or call out the person who made the offensive comments and to that I've been working with them and responding whose pain are you prioritizing when we don't speak? Is this the offender or the offended? And it's important to center the victim or the target of the discrimination. And think about the other people who heard the comment, right? And how they could benefit from having someone else step into the situation. So again, we need to sit with whose pain are we prioritizing. The second one is initiate explicit conversations about race and whiteness.

Ronda: Be the starter for those conversations. Also echo colleagues of color when they publicly voice a concern, let them know that they were not alone and what they noticed and really try to communicate that you see them and you hear them because oftentimes the work falls on colleagues of color to speak up. And they always -- oftentimes feel like they're the only one. Sometimes they've debated for a few minutes before, you know, they even decided to verbalize what the concern or to try to address the issue. And so it's very important that when you see that colleague speaking up, go ahead and echo and support and let them -- and validate that you see them and you hear them. So the other people in the room who may have been thinking of it as well also support that, you know, hey, we all saw this and I'm glad that other people are speaking up about it.

Stef: Absolutely, something that's like -- something that has guided my work for awhile is the work of Audre Lorde. If you don't know already, she is a black lesbian poet and there's a speech that she gave to the modern language association all the way back in 1977 but like her words are still relevant to this work right now. And when she spoke these words, she had been struggling with these really intense life threatening health issues and she began that speech with stating that when faced with death, that thing that she regretted the most were her silences. And it just reinforces for me the importance of speaking up. I'm going to quote her actually. She goes on to explain and she says, "The women who sustained me

through that period were black and white, old and young, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual, and we all shared a war against the tyrannies of silence.”

Stef: And so then she goes on to ask the audience and to ask us, “What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own until you will [inaudible] and die of them in silence.” This was like really powerful and heavy, I understand it. It’s like something that really grounds me, but she continues on and she challenges us with this and she says, “Because I am a woman, because I am black, because I am a lesbian, because I am myself, a black woman warrior poet doing my work, I come to ask you, are you doing yours?” And so I always think about that question, like she’s telling me like she’s sharing the work that she is doing and like how am I doing that myself and all of my identities. And if you want to read more of that speech, it’s in the resources section. So remember -- so listen, amplify, speak up and like, how are you doing your work? Yeah.

Stef: So the next consideration. Sorry. Yeah, go ahead, Ronda. I was like just had all my feelings of Audre Lorde, so please share.

Ronda: You know, what I think is I think it’s awesome and I was just like interrupt to ask you not to take another moment and pause and sit with that last quote because it’s so powerful and I think that it’s a good challenge to us on a day-to-day basis to check ourselves, to think about how are we one, carrying our identities and then how are we stepping up to the play to do our part and contribute to a healthy society.

Stef: Absolutely. Thank you. Yeah. I’m going to take a second. So another consideration that we have in this work is educating yourself and your community. So we know that all of this is connected and everything that we do is about race. It doesn’t mean that everything you do is racist. It’s simply means that it’s in the groundwater, it’s the roots of the world that we live in. This groundwater approaches work that I learned about from an organization in Greensboro, North Carolina, and I linked their groundwater approach in the resources. So you can go back and look at that and dive into that if you want to ground yourself in that, but behind their work is the idea that we have a responsibility to each other and to our community to learn from and with each other, right? So we don’t live in isolation.

Stef: We don’t live in silos. We are responsible for each other. And one example for how to do this working of educating yourself and community -- this one is like such a cheesy teacher one but a book club y’all, so right now I live in Montgomery, Alabama and I started a book club called “how we get free” and I was inspired and guided by the work of the organization I talked about earlier called SpiritHouse. They lead community book clubs where folks come together to discuss these really big ideas in spaces with other folks who are trying to grow. And also Teaching Tolerance will be featuring the work of this Colorado based educators group who are also using book clubs, but they’re doing it with young students. So be on the lookout for that too. And then I want to hear from y’all like what are you all doing to invest in your own learning and learning in your community? What are the things that y’all are doing Ronda -- I feel like Ronda, you are like always trying to like hustle and bring us together. What are some of the things that you?

Ronda: Oh man and speaking about educating community, offering spaces for people to come together and right now we primarily do that through these formalized ways of either educated institute or we host a list of racism conference. But part of each of those events is giving space for people to talk and be in community with one another and being able to come together. And given that time to -- sometimes we want to push content but sometimes we just need to stop and talk and introduce ourselves to other people because the power of relationship, you know, I can’t speak enough about that and I think that really helps us when we’re breaking down barriers and building relationships.

Stef: Absolutely, yeah. I think -- when I was -- we were still living in the same city, like just the amount of growth that I've had from being able to have really important conversations with you. So thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I see a lot of people sharing really cool stuff. Yeah, a lot of things based in talking. Yeah. Thanks y'all. So one more consideration, and Ronda, if you want to take this over when we're talking about taking risks, the importance of taking risk. Yes.

Ronda: Yeah. So we're thinking about taking risks, we ask students all the time to take risks and we should match their vulnerability and some of the ways that we can do that is leading or by committing to doing intentional anti-biased work, making that commitment. We should think about being allies, accomplices and co-conspirators in doing this work and for clarity, allyship as we as an organization to find it and I'm hoping that you all think through a nuance that word, that allyship is not about white people helping people of color. It is about recognizing we all have something to lose or to gain from doing this work together and being committed to doing the work together. Dr Bettina Love helped me adapt to this understanding, which she described as being a co-conspirator and so I really appreciate it and I have started to shift a little bit from ally to co-conspirator because it shows a little bit more of an investment from both sides to be committed to doing the work. And so I'm going to pull from, you know, one of my favorite scholars, Angela Davis who talked with us and continued to encourage us and she has this quote, she says, "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist." And so to be anti-racist, we have to take risks and we have to push ourselves to do the work of fighting against racism and systems of oppression.

Stef: Absolutely. So there's this Melissa Harris Perry video that went viral a few years ago because of her commentary on the risk of being poor in this country. And every so often I will Google that video clips and I'll think about like the necessity of risk taking. And in that clip, she asked this question and she's quite frustrated with the direction of this conversation. And she says, "what is riskier than living poor in America?" And I think about that all the time because folks who are systemically disenfranchised are taking risk every day to survive. And so like going back to what you said, Ronda, as allies and accomplices or co-conspirators, we want to take these strategic, intentional and thoughtful risks. And so what do those things look like? There are so many examples. One example that I'm taking in my own life, and maybe lots of y'all can attest to this, especially because of the holiday season just passed, but you got to talk to wella, like you got to talk to your people, your family.

Stef: So something like when I went home for Christmas over the holidays, having to have really explicit conversations or interjecting in conversations with my family when things were said that were unacceptable, were racist, were anti-black. And so that's a risk, right? Like we want to be strategic about that risk and we want to be intentional and thoughtful, but we still got to do it. So talking to my families is a big one, talking to my people. Another risk that folks can take if you are in a position of power, if you're white, if you're able to do this, and this is an example that lots of folks have taken on throughout the country, that the idea of cop watching, so if you see black folks or folks of color in a vulnerable situation or if you just see folks interacting with police, so just being mindful, maybe staying, maybe recording, you see a lot of that happening. So cop watch is another way to take that risk. Again, being strategic, intentional and thoughtful about the way that we take that risk because you don't want to escalate the situation to cause more harm. And then another one that I'm working through right now is advocating for women of color in the workplace. So thinking about things like hiring processes and meetings -- I've been in a number of meetings in schools when I'm -- like I was still teaching in the classroom where things were not okay and I didn't necessarily speak up. So I'm like working on that practice right now. That's a way that I can take a risk. And so I know that you all probably take tons of risk everyday. We're educators, we're people who work with young people. And so what does it look like for y'all to be taking risks? And Ronda, if you want to share like about things that have been effective or helpful for you?

Ronda: Yeah, real quickly, I'm thinking about taking risks. I know even for myself, sometimes I would have analysis paralysis, right? And think through the situation, did this happen? Should I say this? Should I not? And sometimes I miss the opportunity to speak up in a moment or to affirm a colleague in the moment or to affirm a student in the moment. And one of the things I want people to think about is that those things will happen, right? But one of the good thing is that we can follow up with folks later and reconcile the situation, come back to a classroom the next day and say, hey, this happened yesterday and I didn't address it in the moment, but I want to address it now, or follow up through emails if it's a colleague or if something was said at a faculty meeting and you recognize as a staff, we need to own that this was harmful and that we didn't address it and there's a way to approach it back in a way that kind of mitigate the defensiveness, but you are allowed to follow up later. So if you miss that in the moment-type risk, it's okay. You can always follow up.

Stef: Yeah. Thank you for saying that. Definitely important to remember that we have opportunities to remedy situations. I saw this really good tweet and this is --, I mean, I just thought of this right now when you said that where someone tweeted like, this is the year, there will be no more closed-door apologies. And I think about that a lot about when we make mistakes, we kind of just want to brush over it, but it's okay to be vulnerable like that publicly. It's okay to show that -- to show like, yeah, to show how we can make mistakes and move from [inaudible] itself. So thank you for sharing that. So we're going to switch gears a little bit and talk about how to bring students into this work. This is the part that I love the most. I love talking -- I mean I really just admire young people's ability to understand the nuance of something that adults very often, myself included, are really afraid to talk about.

Stef: So how do we do this? How do we talk about race and the impact of whiteness and white supremacy, because ultimately as anti-racist educators, our goal is to develop anti-oppressive practices. So I'm going to talk about one resource and the one that we're going to use to frame this conversation, which is the Teaching Tolerance social justice standards. And you can get this on our website. So there are four domains of the standards. The four domains are identity, diversity, justice, and action, right? So in these four domains, we have grade band specific standards that show us potential trajectory of anti-racist and anti-bias work. But for the purpose of this next part of the webinar, we're going to be focusing on using these four domains to frame how we could teach about and discuss race, whiteness and power with our students.

Stef: So I'm just going to briefly go over before we dive in. So when we talk about identity, the guiding question is how do we create healthy racial identities. When we talk about diversity, how do we build a healthy community? That's our guiding question. When we consider justice, we need to be thinking how do we meet our needs? And when we think about action, how do we keep each other safe? So I just wanted to briefly go over how we're going to frame this conversation and dive into it. And before that, Ronda, if you'll go ahead and share about all the work that We Are does, please?

Ronda: Yeah, so one of the arms that we operate under is providing anti-racism summer camp for kids and rising first through fifth grade. We particularly targeted this age group because we believe that anti-racism work must begin early on, racial identities form early on and we talk about inferiority and superiority beginning in the womb. And so ideas about how you fit into this society began very early. And so with our summer camp, it's a five-day camp. We have a first through second grade week and then a third through fifth grade week. We have three main goals of our summer camps that we run. The first one is to foster healthy racial identities in youth. And so when we think about healthy versus positive, which was one of the words we played around with having a positive racial identity and trying to communicate that with white children can be a little tricky.



Ronda: And so we thought healthy racial identity was much better way to communicate what we wanted to do. We build a historical understanding of race and racism and we equip families with tools and resources which extend anti-racist practices in the home and community. And so as a team, so it's not just me doing this work, we have a team of people who co-create our curriculum together and so we use a literacy based approach and by that I mean that we choose books that are age appropriate, that help children think about race, racism, skin color and activism in very concrete and specific ways. And whatever books that we use during the day, we center our activities around it to help kind of reinforce the concept and then we give a copy of that book to each child so that by the end of the week, every child has a home library of five to six books that center characters of color. The majority of the text, not all, are culturally authentic. And we hope that the kids read those stories and share them not only with people in their home but also people in their community.

Stef: Thank you Ronda.

Ronda: Go ahead.

Stef: No, go ahead, It's all you.

Ronda: So we were thinking about, you know, how do we develop healthy racial identity? And Stef is that something that you've thought about some of the work that you do?

Stef: Yeah, absolutely. So I think we even had this conversation at some point is I think we were kind of conflicted about whether or not we want white students to develop healthy racial identities because what does it mean to have a healthy racial -- like a healthy analysis of your whiteness? And I'm still really committed to using that word. I don't know if you had any like nuance like things that you wanted to mention with the use of the word healthy. But my goal in working with young people and teaching young people is that when we have a healthy racial identity, we have a sense of who we are. And that is a healthy practice to have, right? So yeah, I don't know if you wanted to share any pieces about just our choice of the word healthy.

Ronda: Yeah. And for one, healthy is an accessible term to young kids and so we use that with the elementary age students and they understand it and they get it. So that was one of the reasons why we chose that and then two, not only having a healthy racial identity includes having a healthy love of oneself, but also an appreciation of others. Right? And if you don't have a healthy appreciation of others, there's also some type of reflection back on oneself, right? To carry that hate for someone else means that there's some disruption going on within your body, within your own identity and so that's one of the reasons why we kind of liked that word, so it's not only about a healthy understanding of yourself, but when you have that, you're better able to appreciate someone else who may be similar or different from you.

Stef: Totally. All right. So the way that this shows up and Ronda, if you want to take over and talk about some of the ways that we do this work and I can pop in, I can jump in a little bit later.

Ronda: Okay. So some of this work involves thinking about the historical understanding of racial constructs, thinking about skin color and the science of melanin and self appreciation and celebration. So when we're thinking about historical understanding of racial constructs, in some ways we kind of lead up to some of that heavier language. And so in thinking about identity, one of the things that we do with the children on the first day is we talk about who they are and allowing them to talk about their name and where they're from and if they know the origin of their names. So on this day, we choose a book, it's



called, “My Name Is Sangoel”, but when you read it -- when you see it, it looks like San-go-el, and so in “My Name Is Sangoel”, Sangoel is a character.

Ronda: He’s a person from Sudan and he’s a refugee who comes to America looking for safety. And you can imagine when he gets here, how this community pronounces his name or mispronounces his name. And so we really emphasize with children that first day the importance of names. And in some way, you know, it can seem like that’s not necessarily directly connected to racism, but it is, so if you zoom out a little bit and understand that being able to name oneself was often denied a people of color, of indigenous people. Their names were changed and renamed, given shorter names, names that some people often say are easier to pronounce. So one of the things that we did with kids on that first day is using the book and the context of “My Name is Sangoel.” He teaches people how to say his name correctly. So he comes to school one day and makes it -- wearing a t-shirt, he draws a sun and then a soccer goal and it is very concrete and explicit way.

Ronda: And so we help the kids learned that they too can teach folks how to say their names and it’s okay to do that. And they come up with pneumonics to teach people. Something else that we do with them is we have them role play so that they can be prepared when it does happen to them. Right? So we’re trying to arm them against this type of racism and so in one of the role plays that we do, we have one of the partners mispronounces the other person’s -- one of the partners calls him something else. And so we have the students who say, for example, my name is Ronda and that’s what you should call me. Another example that we have is that oftentimes kids when we see a name that’s hard for us to pronounce and we then project that onto the child.

Ronda: And so we’ll say your name is hard to pronounce. I’m just going to call you -- you know, we make up something to call a job, to ease our discomfort with not being able to say the name. And so we role play that where one of the partners mispronouncing the name. He says, I’m going to call you and we’ve taught the kids to say, actually my name isn’t hard to pronounce. It’s hard for you to pronounce and I will help you say it correctly. And so in doing that, there’s a shift in the deficit. The deficit is now in the person who can’t pronounce the name and not on the person, their family, their culture, because in honesty, their name is hard to pronounce. Their mom can say it, dad can say it, aunts and uncles can say it. The name is hard for us to pronounce and we have to own that. And so we’re arming kids with language to be able to respond in a way that’s healthy, that affirm their identity and you know, not necessarily to put the other person down, but to make sure they understand this is my name and this is what you should call me, because that has roots in racism. Right? And so part of what we’re doing is creating working definitions and giving kids access to language to help them understand, you know, what’s going on.

Stef: Another one of those pieces that I really, like really appreciate about the way that you approach teaching this, Ronda and if you can say can more on this piece around skin color and the science of melanin -- .yeah and using -- I know the book that you use is really incredible. But in talking to children about the formation of racial identity, it can be complicated because we’re both telling them that race is a social construct. It’s like this thing that we’ve made up, but then also having to explain to them the way that they get their skin color, the way that we exist in the world scientifically, right? So I don’t know if you want to share a little bit about that.

Ronda: Yeah. So one of the books that we use when we actually move to this in our day two of our camp is called, “All The Colors We Are” and the story of how we get our skin color. It has Spanish and English text in the book. So that’s a great resource for one and two, it teaches students about and teaches kids where their skin color comes from and it names, you know, family, geographic location of where you’re from, the amount of melanin in your skin and your exposure to the sun. And one of the takeaways that always

resonates with kids is that word melanin. And so if you ask them anything from the week, they should be able to talk about melanin and what does that mean. And so teaching them that some people's melanin is more active than others. People with darker skin, their melanin is more active, right, than -- and particularly black people have very active melanin, #MelaninPopping. So that's something that we teach them and why people's melanin is less active, therefore their skin is whiter and what we're doing here is making kids race conscious, not colorblind, right, because colorblind is not a thing unless you have a diagnosis.

Ronda: And so we want kids to be race conscious and what we're doing is separating and trying to disassociate the negative understanding associated with skin color versus this is the result of the amount of melanin in a person's skin, right?. And that's not a colorblind either but just trying to help them to disassociate some of those negative stereotypes that people give in relation to darker skin. It's like nope -- this is actually something that we can talk about it and they have the language to explain, my melanin is more active than yours and therefore my skin is darker, right? Or my melanin is less active and therefore my skin is lighter. And in that book, in a very concrete and beautiful way, the imagery is amazing, the way the author describes it, it makes it very concrete for kids. It's a staple that we use every summer and I highly recommend it.

Stef: Totally. And this last piece around identity. So Ronda talks about how we teach children to like really have explicit conversations about their skin color and then moving that conversation into a place of self appreciation and celebration. So we're not trying to get kids to be colorblind. We want them to be fully aware of what like the body that they live in, right? So one of the activities that we do or I've done in the classroom before is creating skin color swatches. And so having the art teacher come in and do a lesson with my students about the way that pigment works in paint and creating colors and so we did an activity where my students were able to combine different kinds of colors to create a new color that match their own skin color.

Stef: And then all my students had an opportunity to name that color for themselves, so taking ownership of their skin color and being able to celebrate and honor it in the way that they want to. And then the other thing with self appreciation and celebration of our identities, remembering that as educators, we have the power to talk more about than just the struggles and the oppression and victories [inaudible] oppression. And so I know that my first instinct when I was like a first-year teacher, I was like, I'm going to buy all the social justice books. So like I bought like every Martin Luther King book ever. And I just like talked nonstop about the civil rights movement. It's all I cared about teaching for a really long time. And I had to remind myself and this is through the work of like having other primarily black women educators teach me that it's not that we don't just need to be focusing on the oppression of black people and people of color that like children should have an opportunity and a chance to appreciate themselves outside of those struggles.

Stef: Like those things are important, but it's not the exclusive experience. And I just shadow this book that I really, really love, that I linked in the resources. It's called "Green Pants." So if you want a book that's like about a black child -- this one is about a black boy who really loves green pants. It's so good and he is asked to not wear his green pants to a wedding, but he's like, I have to, this is like part of who I am and it's really, really sweet and it's not -- it's just such a rarity like if you can think of books, please put them in the group chat because it is such a rarity to like find books with kids of color, specifically black boys that are not about struggle and oppression. Like it's really challenging. So if you want to check that book out, please do that. So we're going to move on. So this next question that when we're talking about diversity, we have to think about this question. How do we build a healthy community? So yeah, how do we do this work?

Ronda: So and thinking about -- and when we do this in our camp and so I'm talking about this because this is how we do this explicitly, right? We asked the children what is the healthy community have and we allow them to name what they would see in a healthy community. We also talk about what does our community need, right? And we allow kids to together collaborate and have these discussions. On this day when we're having these discussions, we also talk about systems. So yes, we talk about systemic racism with kids and we name a few systems such as school systems, legal systems and police systems. And we ask them how are these systems contribute to a healthy community, right? Because they do in some ways, and then how do these systems contribute to an unhealthy community? And for one that helps students think critically about their experiences with those systems, because a lot of them already have had experiences with them and it helps students to also validate that sometimes these systems that are supposed to help us also causes harm.

Ronda: And that's a way for us to bring in different social movements that are happening right now, such as the Fight For Access To Clean Water, NoDAPL, Black Lives Matter movement, you know, anti-immigration movements. Just talking about how systems -- because these are laws and policies that could be contributing to an unhealthy community. And so as adults, we need to ask ourselves these questions as well so that we can offer guidance. Stef, you earlier mentioned SpiritHouse, which is a black woman led organization in Durham, North Carolina and they lead an exercise where participants close their eyes and imagine what comes to mind when you think of safety. These are practices that we should be doing as adults too so that we can re-imagine and create the healthy communities that we want to see and so we have to ask that of ourselves as well.

Stef: Absolutely. Thank you Ronda, and just to know on the same thing around these two questions that you are already doing it. Like I just want to emphasize that like think about morning meeting, thinking about read aloud, when you create your classroom agreements, when you have discussions that like with the Socratic method, like you were doing this work. It's just important that we're being explicit in this practice that we were having intentional conversations about race and building a healthy community and not being afraid to talk about race specifically in those conversations. So I do just want to emphasize an honor that this doesn't have to be like a whole new subject. It's pretty seamlessly into your day. It's like something that fit for me when I was in the classroom pretty seamlessly. All right, so moving forward, this question that Rhonda brought up, like when we think about safety, so then under this domain of justice, how do we meet our needs? Like how do we teach kids about how we meet our needs as a community?

Ronda: I think for one -- again so much of this work are things we already do and the bulk of social emotional learning in the early grades particularly are about how we create a classroom community that is respectful and caring and when we asked that question about how do we meet our needs, that's what culturally relevant teaching comes in, right? And culturally responsive teaching because there isn't one way to meet the needs of all of us. And then all of the people who are listening abroad, you have to have close connections with your classroom, with your classroom parents and just really posing that question to them to think about what are the needs and then how can they be met. And so that's one of the spaces where you have to kind of hammer into your local context and pose that question even among your staff.

Ronda: Like what are our needs as educators trying to provide for students and then, you know, trying to hear those voices. So for us and our camp, this is a question that we've posed to our kids, helping them think about, you know, what are their needs and a lot of ways, you know, they're young kids, they don't know. Some of their needs may not be related to the anti-racism and the justice movement, but it's good just to give them that space to even have those thoughts and to sit with and then throw out examples for kids to think through. Also, is helpful if we share narrative and I'll talk about that in a few minutes in

more detail, but sharing narratives of people in your community about how a system helps them or harm them is the way to help students think even beyond themselves about what are the needs in our local context. And then just listening, listening to them definitely is one of the ways so that we can get ideas about what are the exact needs in our community.

Stef: Absolutely. So just reframing exactly what you just said, just restating it, but, so that question is like, how do we meet our needs is really just a question of like how we create a culture of care and how we create a culture of respect. And I think when I've asked kids when we're doing things like one example to do this work is like creating class agreements and when I asked kids in my class like what their needs are, a lot of them like haven't considered what those are, like it's not a question that we ask young people very often and we should, right? Like I think in the context of a classroom, we don't typically ask what kids needs are and we don't give them space to name those things. I will say that in formulating class agreements, I've talked about this poem before, but there's this poem called "[inaudible]" that you should totally look up and it's in the resources, I believe.

Stef: But the concept behind that poem I usually try to build into my classroom agreements and I I do it with kids, but the direct quote is like [inaudible], which just translates to "you are my other me." So having kids understand that they are connected in this community. So how do we care and respect each other? That's a critical piece of doing this work in bringing kids into this work. The other thing I just wanted to name is giving kids language. Nothing has been more effective than just giving children language and words to express things that they already know so deeply in their bones and their bodies. An example that I think about a lot is like when I went to college my very first like semester and I took like a feminist class, I remember just being like inundated with so many words that I was like, whoa. Like this just explains my like entire lived experiences, tells me so much about my family's lived experience and I had no way of describing it before. And so as educators, we have responsibilities to giving kiddos, giving young people that language, like they need the words to talk about the things that they are feeling and experiencing. And then Teaching Tolerance has a "let's talk guide." If you're like really stumped about how to give kids language and how to talk about it, we have a resource called "let's talk." So dive into that if you're like, yes, I need to give my kiddos language, I need to give them words. Yeah.

Ronda: Thank you for sharing that Stef and the "let's talk guide" is very beneficial. Like I've used that in our work and some of the other resources from Teaching Tolerance to help us further these conversations. One of the things that we do in our camp is we emphasized creating safe spaces. All the things that you've mentioned, Stef, we kind of make sure that we emphasize and are intentional about them. Something else that we do is we caucus and by caucus, I mean that we separate children based on racial identity. And so while I know binaries are not perfect and this one, you know, can be problematic and it can be hit or miss in some situations, we have kids go into spaces where kids who identify as white and kids who identify as people of color, right? And people of color is such a broad group and it's a broad group, it encompasses a lot of different nuance, right?

Ronda: And we're not a monolith as people of color. And so it's not a perfect way of having created these spaces along the lines where people may have had similar racialized experiences. And it also complicates having this type of caucusing when you have kids who are multiracial and it comes down like having kids choose in certain situations. We check in with kids, we tell them about the activity, we tell them the purpose of it. We ask them if they would like to be in a group with kids who are also multiracial or which group would they like to identify where they feel most comfortable? We give them the option that if they're in any one of these caucuses and it doesn't feel right to let us know and we can definitely create an alternative space that feels more comfortable for them.

Ronda: So one of the pros to caucusing is creating spaces where kids who may have similar experiences along racialized ones to be in a safe space to talk about them. It's a process that involves race or racism in a way where this space -- there's more people in that room who have also been the target of this type of racialized discrimination. And so in that way for one, it's good for white children to be in a white caucus to sit with, ask question, to fumble through, to talk about guilt because we have seen that present in kids as young as first grade who can verbalize that idea of guilt and learning about racism and how people who look like them are connected to, you know, causing harm and being racist and having a safe space for them, but also for the kids of color who have been on the targets of racial discrimination, right? And so we create these spaces for folks to share those stories. And so this also can be replicated in schools. It has to be very thoughtful and intentional and well planned out, but it is a way to create that community of care.

Stef: Totally, and we'll just note that we both are acknowledging that like it's different in the summer camp context than in the classroom and how you approach that work will differ and obviously like getting families onboard for something as specific as racial caucusing or caucusing amongst, like in groups based off of race. It isn't something you necessarily just jump into, but something that you structure really thoughtfully. I want to move us along and I really appreciate y'all sticking with us. We're down to our last domain and this domain around action and this question of how do we keep each other safe. So some of the books that have informed my own thinking about this question, books like "Push Out", which outlines the way that black children, black girls are pushed out of schools because of like systemic practices. Another book that lots of us have read at this point, "The New Jim Crow."

Stef: And also just recently, I started reading the young adult version of a book called "Just Mercy." So there used to be only -- it was a memoir by Bryan Stevenson, but now there's a young adult version. So these are the books that sort of have guided and informed my thinking around how we keep each other safe. So I just wanted to share like one of the ways that I do this work with children and this is such a simple practice that was taught to me by this really amazing educator and parent liaison that I worked with in New York City and she used to ask children who were coming to her with an issue with another student, like if they were coming to complain or say something, usually like, because we were in elementary school, like someone just paddling, and she would stop them and ask them and she would be like, "Are you telling me this to keep them safe or to get them in trouble?"

Stef: And I would just read that question one more time. She would say, "Are you telling me this to keep them safe or to get them in trouble?" And there is such incredible simplicity in that question and it invites children and students to reflect on the ways that we care for each other and the way that we can work through problems together. Right? So she obviously had a trusting relationship and she was more focused on accountability and building repair -- repairing a relationship when necessary. But, yeah, so I use this in my own classroom and it helped me walk my talk. Right? So children were able to hear me and see that my actions match my own commitments to the classroom agreements that we created. And honestly, it wasn't only a question that I would propose to students but to myself, so like when I was frustrated with the child and I wanted to like write up a referral or if I wanted to make a disciplinary phone call home, I'd have to like stop myself and I'd ask myself like, "Are you telling them this to keep them safe or to get them in trouble?"

Stef: So like it was something that I had to do for myself, like am I like writing this referral because I'm like really frustrated or like am I trying to like make repair and like and keep this child safe? Right? So it's like -- this is a strategy and action that we can take as educators who have so much power over keeping children safe. So kind of like as a mantra, if you want to remember, something that I try to think about a lot is like our children, our students are not disposable. So I tell that to myself all the time when I think about trust and accountability and making repair and keeping each other safe, children are not



disposable, our children are not disposable, our children are not disposable and not only white students or only students of color or black students, but when we teach about whiteness and about power and we really lean into a practice of building trust and being accountable and making repairs when necessary, then we're able to live out our fullest humanity, right? And Ronda is going to share about how this looks in the camp, but that's -- I just wanted to share that one practice that has been pretty monumental for me in my classroom.

Ronda: One of the things that we do in the camp when thinking about taking action, we share narrative of young people and young students. Some of these are localized narratives and then some are students who are abroad. So for example, we share a story about a student named Brandon. His story actually comes out of Ohio. And so when Brandon was young, he got in trouble at school for writing on the bathroom wall. It was more than getting in trouble. He was arrested and taken to jail, right? Because he was caught writing with a marker in the bathroom when he was 11 years old. And so one of the things that we talked about -- this was happened when he was at school, and so we asked the kids like, which system was involved here and was this system contributing to a healthy community or an unhealthy community?

Ronda: Did this system help them or did this system harm him? And we have the students talk about it. You know, when you're 11 years old and you're writing on the wall in the bathroom, is that something to be arrested over? And I think it's important to name because we're talking about race that Brandon was a Latino student and he came from Latinx background. And so this is what happened to him. Another narrative that we share actually something that happened in North Carolina in Raleigh and it was a Afro Latina. Her name is Selena and she stood up for students who's being bullied on the bus and fought another students. In return for standing up for that student, she was involved in the fight, but she too was arrested and had to go to jail and spent time in jail and could not be in school.

Ronda: And so we share those stories with the students and we talk about the school to prison pipeline with them. And then we just ask students to consider, you know, what are alternative? Did these kids have to be arrested? Do you think that was appropriate or were there alternatives? And kids came up with alternatives and so they talked about -- one child very matter-of-factly said, well, he could have -- in Brandon's case, he could have just cleaned the walls. And you know, that could be a lesson taught to the child, just clean the walls, police don't need to be involved, he doesn't need to be arrested. In other cases, the kids talked about, well in Selena's case, what if they had talked about it as a group to find out why the child was being bullied and why the other child was being a bully?

Ronda: And so the kids are actually sharing restorative justice practices, so you know, things that are just now in our sphere and in the education sphere, things that we should be doing, but the kids know that and those were alternatives that they had offered. So one of the -- to put a little bit more action to this, we have students to write letters to a school board member or to their school board and they take the stance whether they thought it was an appropriate consequence or non-inappropriate consequence, take a stance, right? And then if they thought it was inappropriate consequence, then advocate to the school board about why you feel that Brandon's consequence was too harsh or that Selena's consequence was too harsh. And so, in a lot of ways, when you're using real life stories in your local context, these student letters can be sent to school board members or sent to principals or sent to other governing bodies where, you know, there's a real life action to this in a real audience and that's one way that we taught students that they can use their voice even as a first grader or fourth grader to advocate for justice and for change.

Stef: Thank you. So actually this kind of brings us to the end and I know we brought up so many different resources and different questions to think about and we, kind of, went a little long because we just took



a minute, but we wanted to give y'all a chance to ask any questions and see if we could answer them. We obviously won't be able to answer all of them, but we wanted to give y'all a chance. So please get those into the Q&A and we'll try to get them answered. So actually, let's see, I think we have -- so Ronda, some folks are asking about the books that you use in your camp and so I'm wondering if -- how would you like for them -- I guess they could contact you, right, to get more information about that.

Ronda: Yes, you can contact me. You can send us an email at [admin@weare-nc.org](mailto:admin@weare-nc.org). We have our book list -- we haven't put it up on our website yet, but I will gladly, you know, email that to folks so that they can use the books from the camp. They change every year because we have some students who return and we try to keep it different and fresh for them. But we do have some resources and a book list that we can share and Steff, I don't know if there's on the back end, if this resource can be added to that same resource space. And if not by all means, people, feel free to email us and we'll get that book list out to you.

Stef: Absolutely, and again, if you all didn't catch us at the beginning, Ronda's contact information including the Twitter and the Instagram handles for We Are is in the resource list. So there's a PDF there that has all that info, so you can holler at her. Another question, and Ronda, if you want to take this on, I can read it to you, but, and so this person is asking about resources for talking within the African American community, talking about students who are experiencing like teasing and bullying based off of like darker skin color. So if you have any resources around colorism or books to read. Any thoughts?

Ronda: I'm trying to think what comes to mind. There are some books that talk about -- no, there aren't any that are -- that I have found, right, that center black children and then color variations. And of course as soon as we get off of this there's going to be some titles that pop in my head. So for one, if you are listening --

Stef: And that's okay.

Ronda: If you have resources, go ahead and put them in there and then maybe we can add it later. They are out there, but there aren't that many. And so one of the things that I hope that we're able to do like someone named "Shades of Blackness" is be in a space so we can encourage kids to write about their own experiences and help students publish their stories because a lot of experiences of black kids, and thinking about colorism for children in their language that they can explain, there are not a lot out there. But I appreciate folks who are already put in titles in the group chat.

Stef: Absolutely. And then this last question someone asked about, let's see, how do I encourage others to speak up and embrace diversity? So we have like a speak-up at school's guide on our website. So if you go to [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org), there's a resource there that will help you think through how to have these conversations in your environment. If you have any specific suggestions, Ronda, outside of that speak-up at school's guide?

Ronda: I've used that speak-up at school's guide and I'm working with educators and it is key and I think part of what -- a component of that is doing role play and the scenarios that are part of the guide, teachers really enjoy that and it gets to the point where they even bring in their own scenarios and have their colleagues help them walk through how they could show up differently if it happens again or how they can revisit a conversation when they miss that opportunity to speak up.

Stef: Awesome. All right. Y'all, thank you for being here. Please don't forget to download the certificate of completion and also please take the survey if you can. It helps us get feedback and do better work that will be a better resource for y'all. And then, please, please, please contact Ronda if you have any

interest in the work that she does. She is incredible. Thank you Ronda for being here with me -- with us. I really, really appreciate you and the last thing -- we got some Teaching Tolerance workshops. If you are in Orlando, in Houston, in Nashville, in Indianapolis or Boston, we're coming to you and if you want to participate in our workshops, please, please go to our website [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org). Thank you.