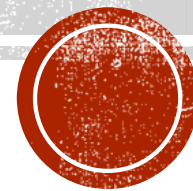


# TALKING RACE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Dr. Erica Frankenberg  
Dr. Allison Henward

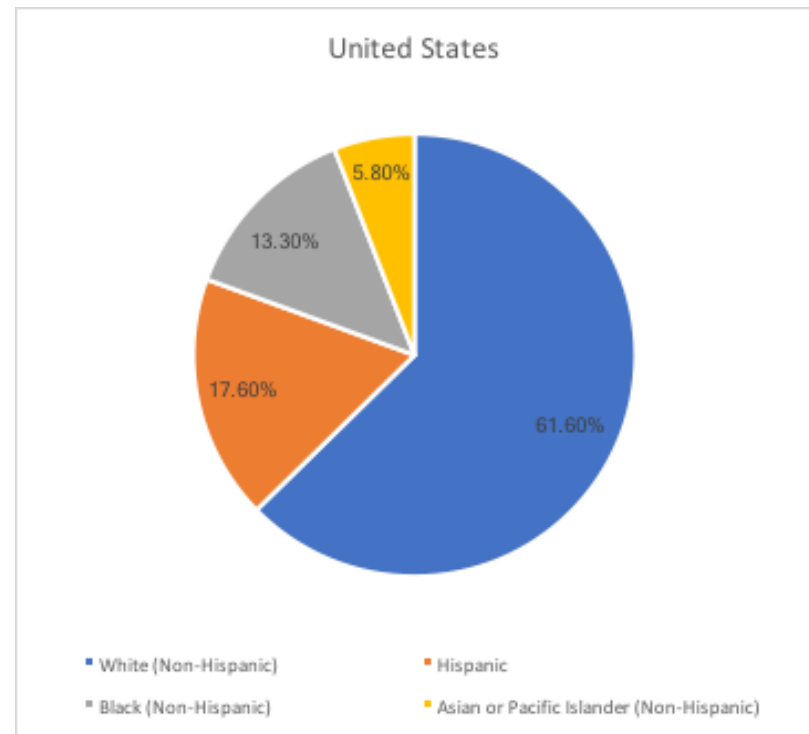
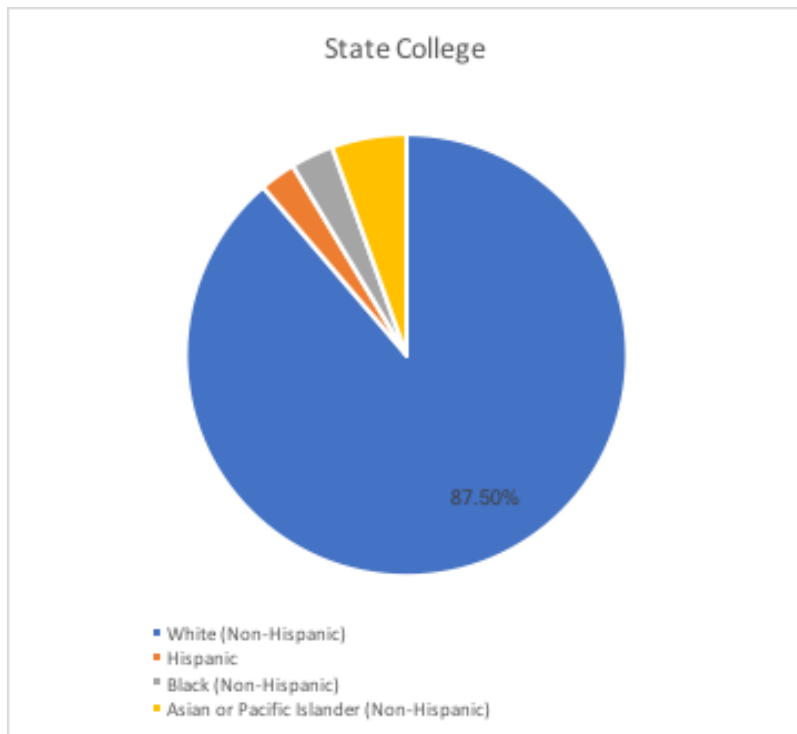
Educators from Bennett Family Center and Hort Woods Child Care



**PennState**  
Human Resources



# STATE COLLEGE & U.S.



# COLORBLINDNESS & BIAS

More than two-thirds of millennials agreed:

- § Society would be better if it were truly colorblind and never considered race
- § Focusing on race & ethnicity prevents our society from becoming truly colorblind

And yet 80% admit that their friends have racial bias. Less than half report that race was a common topic in their household growing up, and only 20% feel comfortable having conversations about bias.

[2014 MTV Strategic Insights - David Binder Research Survey on Millennials & Bias](#)



# RACISM

Individual-level	Systemic-level
<p>Internalized: lies within individuals. Examples are private beliefs and biases about race and racism.</p>	<p>Institutional: occurs within institutions and systems of power. Examples are school districts that concentrate students of color in schools that have the fewest resources.</p>
<p>Interpersonal: occurs between individuals. Example: how individuals' racial beliefs affect their interactions with others</p>	<p>Structural: racial bias among institutions and across society, involving the cumulative effect of many societal &amp; historical factors that privilege white people and disadvantage students of color. Example: how people of color are treated while seeking employment.</p>



# QUESTIONS TO ASK AS EDUCATORS OR PARENTS

Importance of daily inquiry as parents/educators:

- Am I seeing, understanding, and addressing:
  - how society is treating me and my children as racial group members?
  - communities and individuals in their full complexity?
  - the ways opportunities to learn are unequally distributed to racial groups?
- What actions offer opportunities to children in such a world?
- Do my everyday acts promote a more equitable society?

Adapted from *Everyday Antiracism*.



# COMMITMENT STATEMENT

- Based on NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct
- “Although there are rightfully many different perspectives and opinions on public policies, the early childhood profession has clear responsibilities and professional commitments to the wellbeing of every child.” - Derman-Sparks & Edwards

## All Children Belong Here This is Our Promise to You

- We will build an open, safe, and mutually respectful school community in which each child and each family is an important and equal member.
- We will never allow differences of any kind to be an excuse to make fun of, exclude, or hurt you.
- We will listen carefully and lovingly to what worries you and give you thoughtful, age-appropriate information and support.
- We will nurture you to feel strong and proud about yourself and your family.
- We will facilitate your skills to be friends with classmates who are alike and different from you.
- We will honor your family's importance to you by building respectful partnerships with them.
- We will provide support to you and your family when they feel stress, anxiety, or fear because of current events or acts of prejudice or hate.
- We will learn about and help your family use legal and community resources to keep you safe.
- We will work to uproot our own personal biases as adults and will speak out against prejudice and bias wherever we encounter it.
- We will mobilize our courage and become active with others to resist and change any policies and practices that threaten to hurt you or your family.

We are in this together — working for a world where every child is protected and honored, exactly as they are.



# TALKING ABOUT RACE

- Perceived Innocence of children
- History and current state of racism
- Parents and teachers are concerned about “doing it wrong”



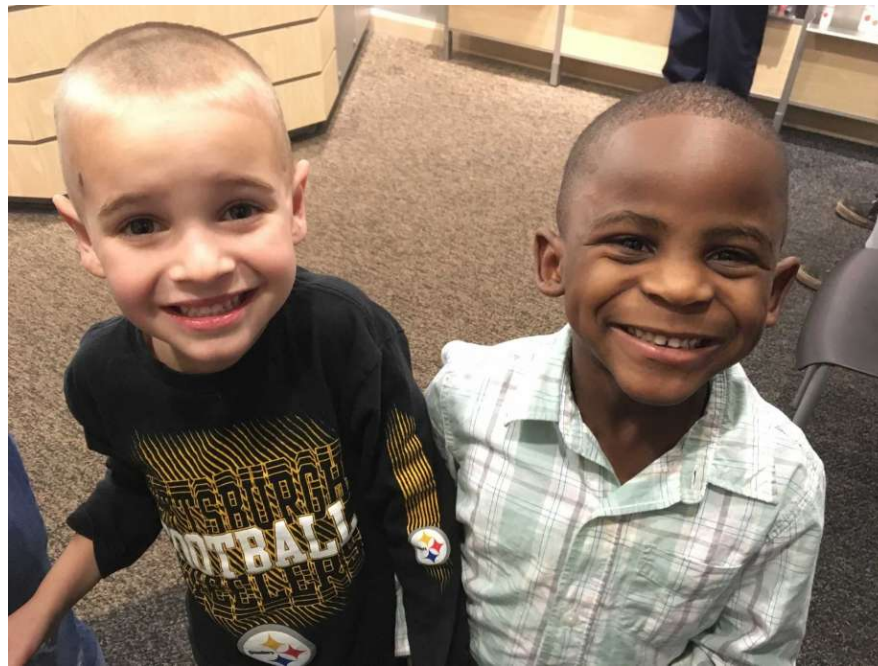
# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH NOT TALKING ABOUT RACE?

- Children see exclusion and rejection based on race every day
- Pretending it doesn't exist **won't make it go away and makes it worse** (Pollock, 2015)
- Families of color often have to have conversations to prepare children for race and racism (Hill-Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009)
- White families don't have to and often times don't (Adair & Doucet, 2013; Vittrup, 2015)





# COLORBLINDNESS AND HAIRCUTS



# COLORBLINDNESS AND COLORMUTENESS

- Many of us are taught from an early age that talking about race – even just acknowledging race – is a no-no.
- Colorblindness “I don’t see color. I just see people.” or “We are all just people.”
- Colormuteness: not talking about racialized names.



# EXAMPLES OF “COLORMUTENESS”

- “Does it come off?” she asked.
- “Does what come off?” I asked back.
- “The black.” She was rubbing her arm on mine as if to get some of my skin color on her.
- Her mother, who had been sitting near us, gasped. She turned to me, pale and embarrassed. **“I don’t know where she’d come up with such a thing,” she said. “We never talk about ... things like that.”** She pulled her daughter out of the water and ended the lesson, shushing the girl as they left.



# HEARING FROM EDUCATORS

- Bennett Family Center
- Hort Woods



# ASSESSING MATERIALS

(ADAPTED FROM DERMAN-SPARKS *TEN QUICK WAYS TO ANALYZE CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR RACISM AND SEXISM.* )

- Every book needs to be accurate, caring, and respectful.
- **Check the Illustrations** - *Look for Stereotypes*
- **Look for Tokenism:** *Is there one person of color?*
- **Look for Invisibility:** *Who is missing?*
- Many children's books use **animal characters instead of people:** such books are not a substitute for exploring issues of diversity and anti-bias fairness with people as the main characters.
- Avoid overuse of folk tales to "teach" about a specific ethnic/cultural group leads to misinformation and confusion.



# HAVING RACE CONSCIOUS, ANTI-RACIST CONVERSATIONS (ADAIR & DOUCET, 2013)

- Can be uneasy and can produce anxiety
- Takes place in a community of trust (Ladson-Billings,2009)
- Require Listening and Questioning
- Go deep
- Are honest
- Show how this happens in life
- Involve families and communities



# FOR DISCUSSION...

First ten minutes:

How has what's been shared resonate with you and your prior experiences?

Second ten minutes:

Name a wondering or core tensions you are feeling.

