



Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice

Marianne Celano , Marietta Collins , Ann Hazzard , Jennifer Zivoin (Illustrator)

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Something Happened in Our Town describes a traumatic event--a police shooting--from the perspective of a White family and an African American family. This story models productive conversations around racial socialization and social-emotional learning, and provides an excellent platform for discussing social justice and race relations with children. Includes a "Note to Parents and Caregivers" with conversation guides, child-friendly vocabulary, and lists of related resources.

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice Details

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Author : Marianne Celano , Marietta Collins , Ann Hazzard , Jennifer Zivoin (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review **Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice** for online ebook

Mrs. Krajewski says

3.5 stars

The best part of this book was the section in the back with additional resources. I loved the premise, but it's a better teaching tool than story.

Krystal says

This much needed children's book provides insightful historical and present day context regarding racial injustice in a manner that promotes compassion and willingness to work on these issues!

Vannessa Anderson says

Young children learn the hard way how police murder unarmed American Descendants of Freed Slaves for sport.

Emma, a young white girl learns she is white. Emma tells her mother how there are white people who believe they are better than American Descendants of Freed Slaves and believe they are dangerous when they are not.

Josh, an American Descendant of Freed Slaves asked his mother if police can go to jail for murdering someone who has done nothing wrong.

Something Happened In Our Town did an extraordinary job in explaining how justice doesn't work for American Descendants of Freed Slaves.

What would have been a treat is for the authors to have included Malcolm X as a brave leader. The illustrations were on-point.

Carla Johnson-Hicks says

Unfortunately, this is a much needed book in our world right now. It tries to explain to children about the shooting of an unarmed black man. The parents of a white child and of a black child each explain to their children about the history of racism, slavery and how people are unfairly treated based upon the colour of their skin or their names. In one family a teenage brother also shared his ideas, which show us that there is much work to be done. The idea is to try and teach them to change this pattern and unfairness. In the book, the children pair up to help a new child feel welcome in their school. This child is named Omad. This is also timely as there are so many refugees in both Canada and the U.S. and are often targeted as terrorists. Even

though the book is explaining the shooting of a black man, it is able to be used to show racism about any group. What a wonderful book to read to children in middle grades, especially when doing a unit on Social Justice. The youth will change the world and this is a good start to education them about the injustices that occur. This is not a book I would read to young children, I would use it with children in junior grades and up. The publisher, Magination Press, generously provided me with a copy of this book to read. The rating, opinions and ideas are my own.

June says

Unfortunately, a needed book. Tries to make a police shooting of a black man understandable to children, with parents (one white and one black) explaining the history of racism - slavery and fear and how they might change the unfair pattern of how people are treated. I did like that the new child they both stick up for is named Omad.

Donalyn says

Too didactic, but there's a lot of great resources in the back matter.

Aimee says

Equally good for both children and parents.

For parents:

In addition to the book itself providing a great tool for parents for starting a conversation with children the back of the book has information geared toward parents preparing for the inevitable conversation that will result from reading the book to their offspring. These resources include:

- Benefits of having this type of conversation with children.
- Suggestions/guidelines for having the conversation.
- Child friendly vocabulary and definitions.
- Sample questions and dialog.

For the children this an attention-grabbing book beautifully illustrated and with thought provoking text that will gently nudge children to think about race, fairness, and the world around us. Hopefully it will make them more cognitive to the feelings of others and impact their interactions with people.

Thanks so much to Netgalley, the publishers, and the author for providing me with a copy for an honest review.

Stephanie ((Strazzybooks)) says

Accessible language and examples for children. This book will inspire kids to make their schools and worlds a better place! I also loved the pictures, with important historical figures in the background.

Finley says

This book was so heartfelt and such a well-written children's book to explain tragedy. The book follows three children Emma, a white girl that is trying to process racism, Josh, a black boy that is trying to process the unfairness of the treatment of people that are like him, and Omad, a new student that looks different who just wants to fit in. The book does an excellent job of explaining racism, tragedy, and encouraging children to "be the difference they want to see in the world." I highly recommend this book.

This review will be posted to thebookhorde.com on 10/15

Faith says

This is a timely book aimed at children between 4 and 8 years of age. Immediately we learn of a police officer who has shot and killed a black man, wrongly suspecting that the victim was holding a weapon.

A young white girl comes home from school, having picked up some of the shooting details, and she processes the news with her parents. They share some of the history of discrimination and prejudice that people of color have faced in our country as well as demonstrating empathy and natural next steps.

Then the attention shifts to a young black boy having similar conversations with his parents, whose emotions are understandably raw and frustrated ("'I'm mad that we're still treated poorly sometimes, but I can use my anger to make things better,' said his father. 'Black people have a lot of power if we work together to make changes.'")

Both young children return to school with new knowledge of how to change the status quo. When a new student begins at their school from the Middle East with only a limited grasp of the English language, other students keep their distance but Josh and Emma are given an opportunity to reach out and both make him feel welcome. We end the story with hope that with knowledge and intentional actions, there can be continued progress in the future.

At the close of the book there is a note for parents/adults that offers additional advice and resources. This extended section will be especially valuable to parents and teachers having these conversations for the first time. The sample questions and answers are well thought out and researched and the dialogues explain gently but clearly how to model these conversations well.

Elizabeth says

This book was mentioned in Betsy Bird's review of *The Rabbit Listened* (she noted that "One of the big

trends of this and last year are picture books that tackle bad things happening in the wider world."), and I actually got to lift it up at an anti-racism book club the very day I read it, in a conversation about children. It's published by the American Psychological Association, and in addition to the backmatter of the book itself (which offers child-friendly definitions of terms, provides some sample adult-child dialogues [I wish they didn't call them "parent-child"], etc.), the website links to 2 PDFs: "Book Lists and Online Resources" and "Read Aloud Tips for Educators."

It's a little teach-y. but fairly good.

The "something" that happened was that an unarmed Black man was shot by police. I like that it opens with "The grown-ups didn't think the kids knew about it. But the kids in Ms. Garcia's class heard some older kids talking about it, and they had questions." We often think that we're protecting kids by not talking to them about certain things, but they're often aware of much more than we realize, and if we don't provide a space for them to ask questions of us, they're just going to get those questions answered elsewhere.

We start with a white girl named Emma asking her (White) family, and after that scene then we transition to a Black boy named Josh asking his (Black) family. In each family, an older kid straight-up thinks cops hate Black people and says so. I appreciated that that sentiment gets voiced in both households -- though the narrative also has the parents mitigate that position.

In an interview, co-author Ann Hazzard says:

As we were writing the book, we struggled with how best to present the police shooting incident. We took the position that the shooting was clearly unwarranted because the victim was unarmed. From the Black family's perspective, the incident is viewed as related to police bias against African-Americans. This presentation seemed essential in order to capture the distrust that most African-Americans currently voice related to police activities and shootings.

On the other hand, we recognize that police officers have a difficult and important job of protecting the public and upholding the law, and that it is appropriate for children to view police officers as generally helpful. We tried to provide balance in the families' discussions of the police. For example, the African-American father says "There are many cops, black and white, who make good choices".

I don't actually think the police are inherently a benevolent force, but I understand why the book chose that moderate stance.

Anyway, both sets of parents talk to their kids about what they can do to make things better. The third part of the story takes place at school, when a new kid named Omad arrives. At recess, the kids are creating soccer teams and both captains are reluctant to pick the new kid (not for explicitly racist reasons, though the fact that he's still learning English does come up), but Emma and Josh remember what their parents told them about unfairness and insist that he join their team. It's a nice example of extrapolating from a lesson and also an age-appropriate way that kids can help create better patterns. (And the illustrations make really clear that the 3 kids are having fun becoming friends -- it's not like Emma and Josh are joylessly Doing The Right Thing; everyone benefits.)

Of the 4 primary creators of this book (3 authors, 1 illustrator) it seems that only 1 (co-author Marietta Collins) is Black, which seems not great to me.

Angela says

This book was excellent in identifying and discussing racial injustice with kids. The back matter that provides helpful conversation starters and answers questions kids of both color and non-color may have about injustice and their own identity was so expertly thought out and presented.

Marie Celano says

This is a timely compelling children's book. It gives an inside look at conversations from different generations and ethnic backgrounds around the topic of racial injustice. I especially thought the teenagers' perspective were spot on. Great tool for having discussions with children around the topic of racial inequality.

Briana McMurphy says

My daughter and I both loved this book. It is informative and addresses social/racism issues in a way that kids can easily understand. I think it is important to talk to your kids about how people of color are treated differently and this book is a great way to start the conversation. The guide at the end is extremely helpful when addressing some of your children's questions. Highly recommend. Every parent should be reading books like this to their children.

Ana says

Do you have kids aged 4-8, or even older? If you do, you need this book.

This is a book parents require, to explain the racial violence and injustice that is so frequently seen on social media or even in the neighborhood.

The story starts with a police shooting where an unarmed black man is killed. Two children ask their families why it happened: the girl is white, the boy is black. So we get two different points of view and distinct emotions. But they both share the feeling of injustice.

The historical roots of racism that start with slavery are explained in a way that children can easily grasp. Parents teach the children empathy, tolerance, and pride in one's color and race. They show the need to fight prejudice and exclusion.

Next day, this girl and this boy, who are friends at school, proceed by showing kindness and helping a new student of Muslim descent.

The authors are all psychologists who have worked with children and families. They give a precious resource for parents and teachers to use in opening up and making easier the conversation with children on the ongoing and tragic issue of racism in America.

You can find a "Note to Parents and Caregivers" in the end, with conversation guides and sample dialogues, child-friendly vocabulary and a list of related resources.

This is a book of the utmost importance for the new generations so that this sad violence pattern based on racism can end with them. This book is a commendable work.

I received this book as an ARC from the publisher and NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.
