

## WELCOME!

We're excited to share who we are and what we're doing. Over the past four years, the teachers and staff at RVSD have taken part in extensive diversity, equity and inclusion training. It's time for the community to join in the work. This year, a Parent/Guardian Equity Task Force was created, bringing together parent/guardian reps from all four elementary schools and White Hill Middle School. Our goal is to bring equity to the forefront of our school community and make our school district a more inclusive place for all students. We want to empower our students to promote equity throughout their lives. Check out the full [RVSD Racial Equity Mission Statement](#).

Many of us are asking, **"What can I do?"** It's time to do more than just stick a sign in the front yard. We need to talk. One goal of this quarterly newsletter is to be a source of information for the community – a place to learn how to [get involved](#), to learn definitions and [terminology](#) that will lead to meaningful discussions, and to find [resources](#) to help us talk to our children about race and equity.

It's time to listen, too. The "Stories From Our Community" section highlights [personal experiences](#) shared by students and families in our community. Our hope is that some part of this newsletter resonates with you. We look forward to getting community feedback and working together in the future.



## DEFINITION OF THE DAY

As society progresses, language evolves. Understanding what words and terms mean will help us take part in meaningful conversations. Each quarter, we'll focus on a definition that is important in the work toward racial equity.

**Microaggression:** The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Source: Derald Wing Sue, PhD, "Microaggressions: More than Just Race" (Psychology Today, 2010).

**Example:** "I don't see color."

**Why it's hurtful / Solution:** "It's important to understand that the goal is not to be color-blind. The goal is actually to see and recognize skin color but to control and regulate your innate impulse to make decisions based on such characteristics. Being able to first recognize this is critical. We all see color. To say one doesn't is just not accurate. We have to first, recognize that each of us, no matter our color, have preconceived notions and expectations about different racial groups. Recognition and acknowledgment are crucial."

Source: Gassam Asare, Janice. "Why The 'I Don't See Color' Mantra Is Hurting Your Diversity And Inclusion Efforts." Forbes, Feb 15 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2019/02/15/why-the-i-dont-see-color-mantra-is-hurting-diversity-and-inclusion-efforts/?sh=395717832c8d>.

## STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

### “An Unspoken Rite of Passage” By Christina Landles-Cobb

It does not have to happen, but it does – too frequently. As black parents, we are always taken aback when it occurs. Because there is no way to ever prepare our black and brown children for “that moment” when another person – a white person – points out their skin color in a degrading way. It happened to my son. In Marin County. I recall my son’s sadness, confusion, and the utter erasure of innocence when another child simply said to him, “I don’t like you because of the color of your skin.” His experience with this little boy was not an isolated event that happened in a random place in Marin. It happened at summer camp and it also happened at his school.

I could have brushed it aside and told him something to let him know that it was an anomaly, but that would have been a lie. I was his exact age when another child boldly and audaciously called me the “N Word.” My father was also that age when he was called the “N Word” for the first time in his life as he held the body of his brother while pleading for help. This uncle I never met was refused medical assistance because of his skin color. While playing at a lake, his friends pulled his limp body from the water, and carried him to the closest house. The man who lived there slammed the door in their faces when he saw a group of wet, brown kids on his porch. As a result, my uncle died.

I assume that for all of those people – the little kids in my son’s life and mine to that man who lived in the big house in Georgia in the 1930s – these were fleeting moments for them that just happened to capture a thought, an ideology, a perspective on how one saw the world and black and brown children in it. But for us – and all of the other little black and brown children who have to experience this – it is a life changing moment that stays with many of us forever.

I can work to accept that my father’s and my own experiences were shaped by the times. But, I can’t hold on to that when my son had to go through this in a community where he should be free to be accepted, respected and loved without his skin color being a barrier.

I think about the little kids who were emboldened to say such a thing to my son. I think about the parents of those kids and wonder how and if they worked with their children to teach them what damage they may have caused with their words. I think about how unprepared and ill-equipped the staff at the camp and his school were to handle the situation when my family came forward to share what happened. I think about the illusion of living in this liberal bubble of Marin County that is often popped and challenged for parents like me.

I share my story to say that this is happening here. And I share a desire that our experiences inspire many to join in the efforts to embrace one another and love our differences, educate ourselves and our kids about racial equity, and to work together so that this unfortunate “Rite of Passage” becomes obsolete—especially in our community and schools.



We welcome you to share your stories to help us all see US—good and bad. We welcome the chance to be better for ourselves, for our schools, for our community and for our children.

# GET INVOLVED!

The only way change will truly happen in our community is for all of us to get involved and take action. There are a number of ways Ross Valley families can get involved:

## Share Your Story

This spring, we are holding a listening tour to gather racial equity-related experiences of RVSD families so we can better understand the issues we are seeking to address in our equity work and learn from what is already being done. All RVSD parents and guardians are invited to participate, and we particularly invite BIPOC and mixed-race families to share their experiences. There are a number of ways to get involved:

1. **Participate in a group discussion:**
  - a. **White Hill Student Listening Session**, April 23rd (note: this is for students only and will be coordinated at school)
  - b. **RVSD Parent/Guardian Equity Listening Session**, Thursday, April 29th from 5:30-7:00 pm
  - c. **RVSD Spanish-Speaking Parent/Guardian Equity Listening Session**, May 26 from 6:00 - 7:30 pm
2. **Submit stories, feedback, or suggestions to the [RVSD Racial Equity Feedback Portal](http://www.rossvalleyschools.org/equityfeedback)**; if you wish to remain anonymous, just leave the contact information blank ([www.rossvalleyschools.org/equityfeedback](http://www.rossvalleyschools.org/equityfeedback))
3. **Speak with a member of the Parent/Guardian Equity Team:**
  - a. **Julia Wolcott**, RVSD Director of Curriculum and Instruction, [jwolcott@rossvalleyschools.org](mailto:jwolcott@rossvalleyschools.org)
  - b. **Eric Saibel** (Habla Espanol), Director of Student Services, [esaibel@rossvalleyschools.org](mailto:esaibel@rossvalleyschools.org)
  - c. **Libbie Landles-Cobb**, Brookside parent, [libbie\\_landles@yahoo.com](mailto:libbie_landles@yahoo.com)
  - d. **Inga Wahle**, Wade Thomas and White Hill parent, [i\\_wahle@yahoo.com](mailto:i_wahle@yahoo.com)



## Join in the Work

Join a Parent Equity Conversation. Our final conversation of the 2020-21 school year will be held on May 27th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm

## Invest at Home

Combatting racism and bias starts at home – in the conversations we have with our kids, the media that’s consumed, and the priorities we set in our lives. Read below for definitions and resources that can help us make this critical investment in our kids.

### Parent/Guardian Equity Task Force Members

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Para Ambardar     | Chris Landles-Cobb    |
| Brian Bercovitz   | Libbie Landles-Cobb   |
| Ruth Ann Binder   | Raemona Little Taylor |
| Mandi Cantril     | Tiffany Nemo          |
| Jennifer Gonzalez | Sue Pierce            |
| Sharika Gregory   | Chad Thigpen          |
| Hayes Handler     | Inga Wahle            |
| Stephanie Hellman |                       |

**Artwork:** Page 1: White Hill, 8th Grade Student | Page 2: Gigi Richer, White Hill, 7th Grade | Page 3: Manor, 4th Grade Students

## RESOURCES

Only have a free minute? Check out the quick tips below. Car rides are a great time to talk to kids. If you're looking for book recommendations, we've picked a favorite for each reading age, from preschool to teen.

### Tips for Teaching and Talking to Kids about Race

**Start early.**

- By 6 months of age babies are noticing racial differences; by age 4, children have begun to show signs of racial bias.
- Let your child know that it's perfectly okay to notice skin color and talk about race. Start talking about what racial differences mean and don't mean.

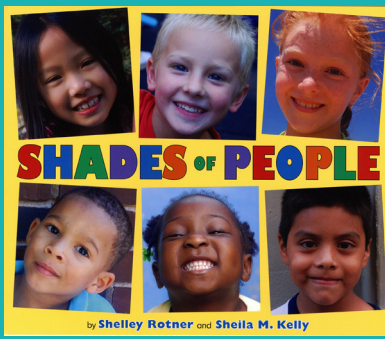
**Encourage your child to ask questions, share observations and experiences, and be respectfully curious about race.**

- Expose your child to different cultural opportunities – photographs, films, books, or cultural events, for example – and discuss the experience afterwards.
- You don't have to be an expert on race to talk with our child. Be honest about what you don't know and work with your child to find accurate information.

Source: <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/teaching-and-talking-to-kids>

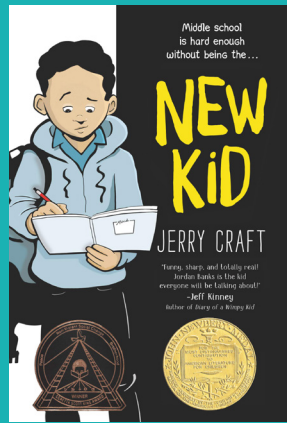
### Further Reading

For young children



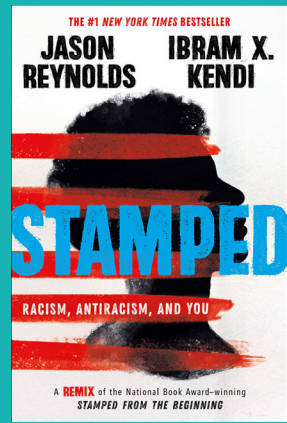
Shades of People

For Middle grade readers



New Kid by Jerry Craft

For teens



Stamped by Ibram X. Kendi

### Social Media Spotlight

**BIPOC OF MARIN: [@bipoc.of.marin](https://www.instagram.com/bipoc.of.marin)**  
 This Instagram account, described as a “safe space for people to share their experiences with racism in Marin County schools,” gives students an anonymous outlet to let their thoughts be heard.

**[The Speak Your Mind Podcast](#)**  
 In Episode 1 of The Speak Your Mind Student Voices series, Gibran Mims interviews five young women of color who go to Tam, Redwood and HS 1327. He partnered with Tamalpais Unified High School District to create this 4-part YouTube/Podcast series that focuses on the topic of race and offers a safe place for students to share their experiences and inspire change in their community.

