

An Open Letter to Minneapolis, Minnesota regarding the screening of our film, *Reflecting on Anti-bias Education in Action: The Early Years*.



August , 2023

Dear Minnesota friends,

You rock! Thank you again for sponsoring the recent LIVE screening of our film, [Reflecting on Anti-bias Education in Action: The Early Years](#), at Minnesota Public Radio, Minneapolis/St. Paul and the opportunity to engage in multiple heartfelt and inspiring conversations about anti-bias education! Thank you specifically Duchesne Drew of [Minnesota Public Radio](#), Dianne Hausley of [Early Risers Podcast](#), and Andrea Bork and Frank Forsberg of [Little Moments Count](#), for initiating and hosting this event. From the start, the process was collaborative and full of promise, purpose and intent.



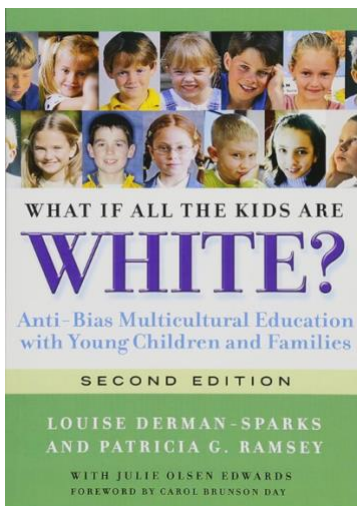
It was truly an honor to be in Minneapolis, the site of George Floyd's murder, which re-ignited the fight for racial justice across the globe. While I have shared our film in many, many places, the *gravitas* of this place did not go unnoticed. My visit to George Floyd Square the day before the screening was emotional and profound. I felt a palpable sense of place- an outpouring of grief, sadness, outrage *and hope*. A people's living memorial.



There were so many emotions, inspirations, sounds and sights in a very short amount of time, and as we know it is a lifelong journey...I would like to reflect back some of my learning and musings.

1. The collaborative commitment to social justice work in Minnesota is evident by the many diverse partners and sponsors for the event, including [Think Small](#), [Center for Inclusive Child Care](#), [Before Racism](#), [Early Funders Coalition](#), [Minneapolis College](#), and others. It was inspiring to be in dialogue with so many people from different walks of life, including educators, health and human service providers, law makers, policy makers, librarians, museum curators, funders, non-profits and more.
2. I was struck by the deeply emotional nature of the response to the film. While we have heard many comments from educators since the release of the film in 2021, it was moving to hear how this particular diverse group identified personally and profoundly with the images of teachers and children engaged in seeking social justice; the power of children's capabilities resonated with all of us. "If the kids can do this work and talk about race and bias, why can't we as adults?"
3. The afternoon dialogue at Minneapolis College with educators allowed us to go further in-depth about understanding more about how children develop their social identities and how to respond to their questions and comments about difference and unfairness, as well as managing conflict between families and teachers.

4. Here are some further thoughts and suggestions for implementing anti-bias education in White communities, which was a topic of interest during my visit:
 - a. Anti-bias work is for all people, all communities and all kinds of settings.
 - b. Historically, anti-bias education was criticized for being too focused on White kids, and not enough on the pressing need for culturally relevant and sustaining education for BIPOC children. This is one of the reasons we (producers) chose to highlight BIPOC voices in our film (Two of the 8 teachers highlighted in the film identify as White).
 - c. We recognize that simply being White comes with privilege; privilege is not just economic status.
 - d. Below are some specific strategies for White people using the 4 anti-bias goals. (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011, *What If All The Kids Are White?*)



- **Goal 1: Identity:** Develop authentic identities based on personal abilities and interests, family history, and culture, rather than on White superiority. Know, respect, and value the range of the diversity of physical and social attributes among White people.
- **Goal 2: Diversity:** Provide accurate information, develop

empathy, and comfort with the differences and similarities beyond children's immediate family, neighborhood center/classroom, and racial group .

- **Goal 3: Justice:** Learn to identify and challenge stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory practices among themselves and in the immediate environment. Commit to the ideal that all people have the right to a secure, healthy, comfortable, and sustainable life and that everyone must equitably share the resources of the earth and collaboratively care for them.
- **Goal 4: Action:** Acquire the desire, skills and confidence to work together for social justice in their own classrooms, communities, and in the larger society. Work in ally ship.

Thank you for making my first trip to Minnesota so memorable. Sending appreciation for all you do for a more fair and just world...

In solidarity and gratitude,
Debbie LeeKeenan

Co-director, Anti-biasLeadersECE.com



For more information about Debbie's visit to Minneapolis:

<https://www.facebook.com/PodcastEarly/videos/237838282548222>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmePARxWgvE>