

RAW FILE

WHEELLOCK FAMILY THEATRE AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY
A KIDS PLAY ABOUT RACISM - VIRTUAL REFLECTION
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>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Hello, everyone. We're here live on Facebook to have a wraparound conversation in response to the play, A Kids Play About Racism. First, I'm going to have my panelists introduce themselves. We have several fantastic panelists on. Don't forget when you introduce yourselves, include your pronouns, your race, and a description of yourself for the audiences who are blind or have low vision. For example, my name is Michael Bobbitt, I use he/him/his pronouns, a lighter complexioned black man, I have a shaved head, I wear a beard, I'm wearing a black t-shirt with white letters that say BLM and

a gray fist on it for Black Lives Matter. I'm sitting in front of a wall of contemporary art.

Why don't we have our guests introduce themselves. Let's have Marianne and Melina pop on and tell us who you are.

>> MELINA ZULLAS: Hi. I'm Melina, she/her/hers. And I am a 12-year-old girl. And I'm light brown-skinned. And I have dark brown hair and my shirt is white and it has some floral decorations. And . . .

>> MARIANNE ZULLAS: Hello, I'm Marianne. I am Melina's mom. My pronouns are she/her/hers. And I'm in my late 40s. I have brown skin. I have brown curly hair, brown eyes, and I'm wearing a yellow t-shirt.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Do you want to tell us what race you are?

>> MARIANNE ZULLAS: I was born in Brazil. Melina?

>> MELINA ZULLAS: And I was born here. And my dad is white. He was born here.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Great. Thank you, guys, for joining us. How about the Robinson family? Do you guys want to pop on and tell us who's here?

>> Let's start with me. My name is Lyric. My pronouns are he, him, and his. I have really curly hair. I have a black shirt, brown sleeves. I have brown skin, brown eyes.

>> And white on the other side.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: What was that?

>> I'm brown, and I have Michael Jordan on my shirt. And I'm drinking kombucha.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yummy. That's my favorite drink, too. What's your name?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: His name is Justice. He has curly hair. Half as much as fine.

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: And I'm 5 1/2.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: I'm 7 1/2.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Who are those people behind you?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: That's my dad, Christopher.

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: Aimee.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: That's our dad.

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: That's mom.

(Laughter)

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: That's my dad.

>> CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON: Okay, guys. So, Chris Robinson, I have brown skin, late 40s. Pronouns he/him/his.

>> AIMEE ROBINSON: I'm Aimee, and I am over 30-something.
And I am white.

>> Yeah, definitely white. But the good White.

>> AIMEE ROBINSON: Thank you. And I have a light green short-sleeved shirt on and braids.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Fantastic. The Bewtra family.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Hi, this is my mom.

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: We live in Mel rose, Massachusetts. I'm Indian American. I'm wearing a black shirt with a sparkly jacket on top. And I have brown skin, black hair, and brown eyes.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: I'm Viraj. I have black hair and brown skin. I go by he, him, and his. And so I'm wearing a shirt with cars on it. And --

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: I forgot to say my pronouns. I go by she, her, and hers.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Is there anything else?

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: What's your race? How do you identify?

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: I'm Indian American.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Fantastic. So glad you guys are joining us. How about Bonnie and Adelaide, do you want to pop on screen?

>> ADELAIDE: I'm Adelaide. And I have brown hair. I have brown eyes. I have pale white skin, with a pink shirt and a white wall around me. And this is my mom.

>> BONNIE: Hi, I'm Bonnie. I'm actually from the Gottabees, but today I'm here as a parent. I have three kids and Adelaide is my daughter. I am white. I'm in my early to mid-40s. And I have very curly red frizzy hair and black glasses and a burgundy shirt on.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: I'm so glad you guys are all here. We're going to have a lot of great conversations and maybe a bit of fun. Before we begin our reflection, we would like to recognize the land where the theater and the Gottabees sit. And our panelists reside in the traditional homeland of the Massachusetts people and their neighbors. We acknowledge the painful history of our predecessors here and honor the indigenous peoples connected to this land on which we gather.

The theatre and the Gottabees are creating performances for the entire family, joining a collaboration of 41 theaters for young audiences from across the United States to present this world premier online theatrical experience to children and families across the country. I will be joined today by Tanya Nixon-Silberg, of Little Uprisings, a collaborative and lib

rative racial justice program for kids. So, let's get started. First, I'm going to turn it over to Tanya so she can do a fun little exercise. Tanya, do you want to tell us who you are and your pronouns?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: All of that stuff?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yes.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. Oh, I'm so happy to be here. My name is Tanya Nixon-Silberg. I use the she/her/hers series for my pronouns. I am black. For people to identify me, I have brown skin, dark brown skin. I have dreadlocks and some of it is a little bit red. I have dangling earrings and a maroon shirt on. Behind me is a plant. And also a white wall. Who here has seen the actual play, A Kids Play About Racism? We've all seen it. Okay. So, one of the things that I thought was -- it was -- it made me have a lot of different feelings. What about you? Yeah? You can just nod or say no, it didn't make you have a lot of big feelings, or thumbs-up.

So one of the things we can do when we have big feelings about something is that we can look inside of our bodies to see how we're feeling. And we can regulate that. We can do that through our breath. What I want you to do, if you're in a chair, you all look like you're sitting. See if your feet can touch the

floor. I want you to shake out your shoulders. Look like you're doing a big dance. Great. You know when you smile, your whole body starts to change. So, smile and shake out your shoulders.

(Laughing)

Are you seeing the people on the screen? It's so great. All right. Stop shaking. And feel your body. Take a deep breath in. And breathe out.

>> Oh, Justice.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Breathe in. And breathe out like a cow. Moo!

(All mooing)

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Breathe in one more time. And breathe out like a cat. Meow!

(Meowing)

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Awesome. So, Michael, I'll put it over to you. Now that we are feeling our bodies and we're inside of our body, we are ready to have a conversation about the play and about what -- how we see ourselves in this. Viraj, you had a question.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, when someone is bullying someone that's not me, it kind of feels worse for me than it feels for the person that's getting bullied, because it's like they're

getting bullied and I want to do something about it. But then I'm going to get bullied. So it's two things for me. And then for the person who's getting bullied it's one big thing.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Viraj, you said a couple of things that I want to touch on. I'm going to write down what you just said so that we can come back to it, because this idea of bullies is really big. We saw a lot of that in the play, right? There's a lot of bullying happening in the play. You also said something about what is our job? What are we supposed to do when we see something like that? So I'm going to write yours down and then we'll come back to it, okay? Is that okay?

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Yeah.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Okay. Great. Go ahead, Michael.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Sometimes when I've been bullied in my life, I feel less great. Do you guys recognize that, does that happen to you sometimes? So, I want to ask you a question. What are the things that you do that make you feel great? I'll give you an example. Today I went on a kayak trip with my good friend. And we were on the kayak. I said something that made her laugh and it felt so great to make her laugh. What are the things that make you feel great?

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: Laugh so hard that he fell off the kayak?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Didn't, but we almost did. When we were coming out of the kayak, we almost did. Tell me some things that make you feel --

>> Back onto the shore?

>> AIMEE ROBINSON: Hold on.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Melina?

>> MELINA ZULLAS: Well, when I'm with my family.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yeah. Anything else?

>> MELINA ZULLAS: Well, I like to play basketball.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Basketball.

>> MELINA ZULLAS: When I play basketball, I feel good.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: That's amazing. Adelaide, tell me, what are some things that make you feel great?

>> ADELAIDE: Being with my family and friends. And having fun.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: What do you do when you're having fun?

>> ADELAIDE: Like, playing a game, or playing soccer, or stuff I like to play with that I don't feel like they don't want to play and they're just being forced to play, and I'm not being forced to play. Something we all want to play.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: That's amazing. Viraj, tell me some things that you do that make you feel great.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Basketball, and dancing, and seeing my friends at school, which is not going to happen anymore. Not just because of corona. There's another reason.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mysterious.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: How about Lyric and Justice? Tell me some things that make you guys feel great.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Well, first there are a lot of things that make me feel happy. So, I like playing Pokemon Go, looking at my Pokemon cards, having Zoom meetings. A lot of things.

>> MICHAEL BOBBIT: Yeah. How about Justice? Maybe playing with toys?

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: I like drawing. And I like running outside. And I like to draw on paper.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: You already said that.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: That's amazing. Great artists that like to dances and draw. We have some people that play basketball, and soccer. I have another question for you, because I think that all these skin colors on the Zoom call are so amazing. And they remind me of some of my favorite things in the world. I like my skin color a whole lot, so sometimes when I look at my

skin color, I think about apple pie, and caramel, and like caramel corn, and my favorite teddy bear when I was a kid. Can you guys tell me some things that your skin color reminds you of?

>> ADELAIDE: Hmm.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Tell me. Viraj, I know you can think of some.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Looks like Viraj is thinking about it.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yeah?

>> ADELAIDE: Right now it makes me feel like vanilla icing.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Good color. Yeah?

>> ADELAIDE: What else . . .

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Tanya, your skin reminds me of brownies.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: That's what I was thinking, and I'm just as sweet. (Laughing) Yes, I was thinking that as well. And if it's not something that you can think about right now, we can also -- I'm seeing that Justice or Lyric, Lyric, you have something to say?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Yeah. You see I think my skin color is great. And I think -- you see, I think my skin is gray. And I

call my skin gray. And I also think that the gray thing is short for gray matter.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Okay. All right. You know what, I'm going to pin that. Do you know what gray matter is?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Intelligence.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. So your skin color -- thank you. So, Lyric, you just went to your whole name there. That was a whole lyric. Your skin color is knowledge. Your skin color is greatness. Your skin color is the universe. And thank you so much for pointing that out for other brown folk that are listening right now.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yeah. Melina, do you have any thoughts?

>> MELINA ZULLAS: My skin color reminds me of the beach. And I really like to go to the beach. And it also reminds me of caramel, which right now I have braces, so I can't eat it.

(Laughter)

>> MELINA ZULLAS: But when I can eat it, I really like it.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Yeah? Adelaide, do you have anything your skin color reminds you of?

>> ADELAIDE: I said vanilla icing.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Icing. Yummy. That's my favorite kind of icing, too. Do you guys want to do something really fun with me?

>> ADELAIDE: Sure.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Fun, yeah? I want everyone to lean into the camera on their device and let everyone out there see your beautiful skin color.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Really close. I got this from the Gottabees. Oh, look how beautiful. Oh, look at -- oh, how beautiful.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Wow. My favorite teddy bear.

(Laughter)

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: I love your skin colors, guys. Tanya, do you want to go into our next little conversation?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yeah. So we just talked about what our skin color looks like, what it means to us, and how we talk about our own greatness. Let's talk some more about the play. So, the play is about skin color and how it starts. And I'm going to read it. And I'm going to try to do it just like how the actor in the play did it, okay? So, you know, don't judge me too harshly, all right? It says, in a world where people have been forced to shelter in place because of a virus outbreak,

they sit in their homes unaware that there is another virus outbreak that has infected humankind for centuries -- a virus so easily contagious that many don't realize they already have it.

It is already inside their homes. It is already inside their hearts. It is -- what is it? Tell me.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Racism.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: It's racism. Can someone tell me what racism means? And I like seeing raised hands.

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: The color of your skin looks like something.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: It has something to do with the color of our skin. Remember our rules, y'all. One mic. So who else wants to say? Go ahead, Lyric.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Racism is you getting excluded from games, getting treated meanly, etc., all because of the color of your skin. But those people who create racism just don't realize that it's not all in the color of the skin.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. So, who created race and racism?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Well, I'll tell you.

>> JUSTICE ROBINSON: You did.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Lyric and Justice, I'm -- we have a hand raised. So we're going to ask Viraj. Go ahead, Viraj.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: I don't have a question, but at school one time -- so at music, there was this thing. We were singing a song. It was not a good song. It was called I've Been Working on the Railroad, which was what the enslaved people sung to keep themselves happy. And now White people sing it as a way to sort of make fun of Black people.

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: It was a minstrel song.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So me and my friend, I worked on a paper. And my friend helped me know what to say to the music teacher. And so we gave the paper to the music teacher. And then everyone said it's about I've Been Working on the Railroad song. And she read it. And then a little later they called us to the principal's office -- not because we were in trouble, but because we were . . .

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: They were --

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Upgraded.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. Let's have everyone be upgraded for calling out racism. Absolutely. You had a question.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, what we -- what happened was they asked us a bunch of questions. And then -- and how we knew about

it and all. And I knew about it because someone sitting right next to me told me about it. And --

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: Your friend also knew about it from his mom, right?

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Yeah. His mom used to sing it to him all the time. But then one day she got the news that it was not okay. And she said we can't sing this song anymore. And then my friend asked why. And then she talked to him about it. And now what happened at the thing was, I talked about black face, which is where White people paint their faces.

>> MANISHA BEWTRA: Part of it was that people didn't always know that it was wrong, but they took action, right, once they realized the history of it.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Right. My original question was who came up with the idea of race? And Viraj, you just talked about some history, right? There were just a bunch of dudes in Europe that said, we want to go to people's houses and their homes and take stuff. How do we make it okay? And so they came up with -- ooh. They came up with the craziest story that they could ever have told, which was the story about race. They said, the people that we want to take the land from and we want to take the people -- you talked about enslaved people, right?

Those people, they're Black and we are White. So that means we are great. So we can go and do this thing. And they told that lie so often that other people started to believe it. And in the play it says that racism is treating someone badly and excluding people because of their skin color. Now, I'm going to talk a little bit more about that. Racism is a little bit of that. It's also so many other things.

Because people believed that lie for so long, all of those rules -- and let's talk a little bit about rules. The rules actually made it so that schools can be racist, and made it so that neighborhoods can be racist, and made it so that law enforcement, police can be racist. All of these systems -- they're called systems -- that are in place. So a system -- does anyone know what a system is?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Adelaide?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Adelaide?

>> ADELAIDE: It's a place that's running, that everyone knows the rules, and the laws, and they have to follow them. And then they form a group, kind of. And they pass the word, etc.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: So, you're right. So, a system -- you said a group, right? A system is a lot of things working together to make something run. So this system of racism is

how -- basically, how our country runs. And it's something that we all can see. It's not one just one person being mean to someone else, although that's a really big thing and something we saw in the play. It's also a school. Who's heard of people not being able to go to school? There have been people that have not been able to go to school. And I see hands raised, so I'm going to stop talking. Lyric, tell me what you want to say.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Okay. So, think of life as a game of chess.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Tell me.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: The White team is focused on nothing less than winning. But they just don't know that the Black team has a chance of winning, too.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Are we recording this? Because these are the songs that our kids need to be hearing.

>> Yes.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: All of y'all are fire and saying all the things that sometimes adults are really scared to say. So, yes. So, the idea -- it gets back to my idea about -- so, who started it. And then we have racism. Racism is everywhere. It says it in the play, where it has racism flying out at people. And it looks like bugs, do you remember that part,

you're trying to kick it and all these things. So, we have racism in our systems.

There are a lot of people outside protesting and things of that sort. Whose job is it to fix racism? Yes, Viraj. Whose job is it to fix racism? Did I see a hand? Melina.

>> MELINA ZULLAS: Everyone's job.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: So, let me tell you. It's everyone that's trying to do it. But I'm going to give you a little bit of an analogy. Can you picture this one thing? Now, I am in your living room and I have a huge jug of milk. And I say you know what, I just want to pour this whole jug of milk in your living room. And you're sitting there on the floor. Whose job is it to fix it? Whose job is it to clean it up? I see y'all pointing at me. Is it my job to clean up the milk? You're pointing at me?

Very enthusiastically pointing at me. But y'all are sitting in it. It's in your living room. It affects you. It doesn't really affect me. Whose job is it to clean it up?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Adelaide?

>> ADELAIDE: It's yours.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: It's still my job?

>> ADELAIDE: It's the person who dumped it out.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: That's right. So the person that dumped it out, it's still my job. Who came up with the idea of race and racism? We've been dancing around this word for a little bit, so let's just say it. Who came up with the idea of race and racism? Go ahead, Adelaide.

>> ADELAIDE: I'm guessing White people. And wanting more stuff. And wanting to be higher -- on a higher level than other people. And then they're like, oh, other people have different colored skin than me. Maybe I can bully them and use their lives because they have a darker skin tone.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: You were right up until that last point, because I want to switch it. It wasn't -- it's not because of the skin tone of the people. It is because of their White skin. So you just said all of the things. So if I say whose job it is to fix racism, Lyric, whose job is it to fix racism?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: It's the guy who made it. And also, if there were two words to describe the person who made racism, it would be psychotic and sadistic.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Those are two really big words. So, do you want to tell everyone what those two words mean?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Psychotic means crazy and sadistic means mean.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. Now, Viraj, this gets to my next question. Thank you so much for showing that sign, because absolutely, Black Lives Matter, right? They are people. Let's talk about the job. Adelaide just said that the person who made the mess of racism, which are White people, are the ones that should fix the mess, right? For all the other people that are in this room, people of color, Black people, what's our job? Yes, Viraj, you're just showing me all the art. It's great. What's our job?

This question is for people of color in the room, Adelaide. Go ahead, Lyric.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Our job is to fix racism, because I don't think the person who created racism is going to shut off that thought.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mmm. Yes. Right. And that's why there's a lot of people -- a lot of Black people outside right now during a pandemic, during the coronavirus, doing this work. We've been fighting for a long, long time. And we're tired. Our job as people of color is to heal from this. Our job is to heal.

And what does it mean to heal? What does it mean to heal from racism? What can that look like?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Melina, do you have a thought?

>> MELINA ZULLAS: Maybe to make sure it gets done. And maybe to help White people make things better.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mmm. So, one way to heal is to help our community, yeah? What else can we do to heal? What does it mean to heal? Go ahead, Lyric.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: So, what it means to heal racism is to treat everyone you see nicely, even the bullies, because once I thought I was White, but I was actually Black. And if you see a bully who's Black but you don't know it and you treat them badly, then you're going to be the one promoting racism.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mmm. So what I think you're saying is that we should actually know the race of the people that we're talking to, right? Another thing I think you're saying is that even within our own community -- even within the Black, indigenous, and other people of color community -- we have racism. We have ways in which we talk to each other that is not okay. That's another way to heal from this. It's this rule --
hmm?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: I concur.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Thank you. There is this rule -- this big rule. There's a word in the play called White supremacy. It's this huge idea that Whiteness is the best thing and then other things are not. And if we all think that way, then it comes out in so many different ways. Once we see it, it's like the boogeyman. It goes away. Once we start to see what are the rules that people are saying. Like if you have -- if you don't have a lot of people of color in your neighborhood, that's a rule, right?

That's White supremacy. If you don't have a lot of people of color in your classrooms, if you don't have a lot of people of color in the theater, in the shows that you see, then that means that White supremacy is in there. And it's all of our jobs to say hey, there it is. I'm going to call it out. I'm looking at my -- we did the milk. We talked about whose job.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Then we want to talk about --

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. So, Viraj, you just showed me your Black Lives Matter sign. Can you tell everyone else about that? Tell me what Black Lives Matter means.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, it's not saying that White lives don't matter and Brown lives don't matter. It is saying that Black lives -- people are getting rid of Black lives. They are killing

Black people. And then what happens -- what Black Lives Matter means is Black lives aren't the lives that are getting cared for right now. So, it doesn't mean we need to kill the White people. It means that Black lives matter.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Right.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: White lives matter and Brown lives matter. All lives matter. But, you're not going to say that because people are actually using that as a way to say Black lives don't matter.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: So, here's one of the things. I've done a few workshops for kids, with kids about Black Lives Matter. And I think because we talk about we need to love everyone, and we need to include everyone, when you say Black Lives Matter, just what you just said, Viraj. People think, that means that you're not saying other people's lives matter. Now, I'm going to give you all an analogy. This is something you can use, like the milk. You can use that analogy. Another analogy -- an analogy is just a story that helps you get another concept or another idea.

Imagine that your house is on fire. Imagine that your house is on fire. And the fire people come. And there is a neighbor that says, you know, why are you going towards that house? My

house could be on fire. My house matters, too. You're all shaking your head. But when people say all lives matter, that's exactly what happens. We're not looking at the house that's on fire! And that's where our focus needs -- Viraj, go ahead.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: My mom used that exact same example.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Awesome!

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, say three doors away, someone's house is on fire. And we're -- we go to our neighbors. And then we say, hey, look at that house, it's on fire. And that neighbor is like, hey, my house matters, too!

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: That's right. It just doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense. Right.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: Your house does matter. But it's not the one getting attacked.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: That's on fire, yes. And the protests that are going on, and the music, the art, all of the things -- and this play is all of us just shouting, fire! People pay attention to that. I think -- first off, let me just say that I think anyone paying attention to what's going on, and that's on the Facebook Live right now, think about what the kids that are the same age as you are saying. Know that you can say

these same things in your family. You can say these same things at your school.

Say the same things to other adults, because a lot of adults don't understand that concept about saying -- we're just saying -- we're saying Black Lives Matter. It hasn't mattered for a long time and we need to say that. And we need to be out into the streets. And we need to make sure that the people that are making this happen do something about it. One second, you guys. Melina, when you said that we need to oversee the people doing the work, I felt that so hard. Thank you for that, because I was wondering.

It's just something that I've been thinking about a lot and I'm like, if I go away, do I know if this is going to happen? I don't. So I can be a facilitator for making sure that people do the work that they're supposed to do. A facilitator is a leader that makes this work go through the things that it's supposed to go through. But also, we need to heal.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: I was going to ask you a question, because -- and maybe the kids can help us. What would it take to get rid of racism? I'm sure these guys have a bunch of really good answers.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: What would it take, Adelaide, to get rid of racism?

>> ADELAIDE: It would take all of us working together. It would take Black and White people. So it's not just we're the only ones. It needs to be everyone.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Who needs to do the most work, Adelaide?

>> ADELAIDE: I think the White people, because they started it. And they haven't been doing anything, like, to grow back to when everyone was equal.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mhmm. Yes. All right. I think I saw Justice's -- sorry, Lyric's hand up first. Go ahead, Lyric.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: So, I have this thing called -- I wrote this thing called A Kids Book About Racism 2.0.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: 2.0?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Yeah.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes!

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: A Kids Book About Racism, 2.0.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Viraj, I see your hand.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: It says hi, my name is Lyric. I'm Black and I don't have it easy in this culture. We get bullied a lot, we get excluded from games, people call you brown-skin and names

like that. In kindergarten I had three bullies. They were real bullies and Julian tried to blind me with a pencil.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Oh, my.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: He didn't pull it off, so that's a relief.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: This isn't in Braille, right?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: I got it.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: And what is racism? A. it's you getting bullied, excluded from games, etc. And it's all in the skin. What is racism? Is it left, right, behind you or out of sight, up, down, where's the virus that makes you frown? That's just a poem.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: It's not just a poem, it's a poem. Yes. Thank you. Everyone is applauding for you, Lyric.

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Yep. And also, back in first grade, my teacher told me there was a softball game and only the girls could go. I was like, what's with that? And then I told her. And then I gave her a good lecture about Martin Luther King, Jr. and all that. And it was related. Not only that, my parents concurred with me.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: All right. Great. Now, we're pass the mic over to Viraj. Go ahead.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, something you said was Black lives haven't mattered for a long time, which is not true. They have mattered for a long time. They haven't been treated like they've mattered for a long time. So --

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Thank you for that clarification. And thank you for correcting me, because you're absolutely correct.

>> VIRAJ BEWTRA: So, in the play also, they were bullying him. And he needed help understanding what racism was. And it was like what if it was like in the play where someone Black was bullying someone Black because that person was Black, and that Black person did not know that they were Black? And that's why they thought they should be bullying the other Black person.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: So, that's a good question. That goes to what our job is as people of color in our community. It is our job, in our community, to point that out, right? Because again, we live under this umbrella of White supremacy and it just goes into everything. It's like the air we breathe. And it's our job, our parents' jobs, our schools' jobs, our neighbors jobs, our government's jobs, the president's job to

make sure that we -- yes. Everybody's eyes got really big -- to make sure that White supremacy doesn't win.

I have one more thing. I just wrote it down. Here is where -- I'm not going to do the other thing. But here is the thing that I want to kind of end with, and I think we're going to talk. At the beginning, you talked about your greatness. And I want to read back to you what your greatness is so that you know that you have already a tool in your arsenal to how you can fight racism. So, Michael said that his humor -- his greatness is his humor. We need laughter in this movement.

Melina, you had talked about family. We need family and community in this movement. How can you use your family and your community to get rid of racism? Adelaide, you also said family and friends. But another thing I thought about is you were talking about making sure that everyone is comfortable in the games that you're playing. Making sure and checking in with the people in your community is really important. And it's a big thing that we need in our movements.

Viraj, you had said basketball and dancing. Both of those things require us to move our bodies and require us to know where we are in space. Being able to show other people that hey, we are moving bodies, we are ones in this space, also using our

bodies to take up space. When you have your sign, you're taking up space, letting people know that Black lives matter. And Lyric, you had said -- I'm sorry, I think Justice said this. Justice said happy, and he plays Pokemon Go and cards. Lyric said that, right?

>> LYRIC ROBINSON: Yeah, I said that.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Okay. So, being able to play, we have to play in this movement. And this is something that's going to require radical imagination. How can you, in this movement, make sure that people are playing? Because we all need that. And Justice, you said art. We need art in our movement. The play about racism, A Kids Play About Racism is all art. We need art to get us through. And so use your art for our movement. And that's all I'm going to say.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Hey, kids, Marianne, Melina, Chris, Justice, Viraj, Bonnie, Adelaide, you guys are amazing and I hope with you guys naming your greatness, I hope you will see that those are superpowers, because we need everyone. We need adults and kids -- especially kids -- to help us see how we can get rid of racism. You guys are really powerful and strong. So Tanya and I are going to talk a little bit longer. I want you guys to stop your video and mute yourselves. We'll see you in

the end, all right? Keep listening, though. Tanya, that's amazing.

I think that it's interesting to hear such wisdom and truth coming from the mouths of kids. And I'm guessing in your line of work you hear this all the time.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: All the time. It is the best. I haven't been in front of kids besides my daughter in months. And I miss it. And that was just really -- that spoke to my heart. It gives me so much joy to be able to do this work, and just have the kids be able to talk with each other about what they know about justice, because they always surprise me and they shouldn't. It shouldn't be surprising to me, but they always delight me with these conversations.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: That powerful book that -- was that Lyric that wrote that right then and there? I know Viraj has a social justice blog out there. And so just the power of people that are under the age of ten to help us change the world. One question I have for you is I know that conversations about race are very, very hard. And I don't think it's hard for people of color to talk to their kids, because their kids are experiencing it every day. It's very hard for a lot of White people to talk

about race. Why is that, and what are a couple things that parents can do to fix that problem?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: I think one of the things that's really important, specifically for White parents, is to call out Whiteness. And a lot of times in my work, when I work with kids, we usually ask kids what their race is. Kids of color overwhelmingly know that they are kids of color. White kids don't. In addition to this book, which I think talks a lot about anti-Blackness, there is another book called Not My Idea. I am blanking on the name of the author, but it talks specifically about Whiteness and what parents -- White parents can do to talk with their kids about race and racism.

Once you talk about the thing that you know, it's easier, right? I think White parents don't know what Blackness is and what that means. But if you can talk about Whiteness, then you have a space in which you can actually move forward with some power and also impart some power to your children as well. I would also say -- and this is something I learned from a friend of mine. When you talk about Whiteness, Whiteness was traded in from culture, right.

So being able to say when your culture is and what that represents actually -- I always say that White supremacy in our

culture is like two pieces of duct tape together and once you start to peel it away, you start to see it for what it is and how damaging it is and what we've lost. And so when you talk about culture -- because it took a lot of journeys for a lot of different White cultures in the U.S. to become White.

And it's a thing to talk about. What was traded in for this Whiteness?

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Interesting. If you look at the history of Whiteness, there were certain White people that were excluded, like way back when we were defined by where we were from.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Mhmm.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: You were Italian, or you were Irish. And a lot of the Irish -- white immigrants that came over here had to fight to be called white. So this melting pot thing has happened. What do we lose out on by not having conversations with our kids about racism?

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: It's kind of like -- I talk in analogies a lot. I just realized that.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Robust metaphors are very good.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. What do we lose out on? We lose out on our humanity. When we choose -- and it's a choice.

When we choose White supremacy, everyone loses. When we choose privilege, everyone loses. And White supremacy in our culture is hurting everyone. So we have -- you know, we have all of these systems in place to make things kind of okay. So, capitalism, like all of our -- how we operate and that has been laid bare by COVID is showing us what White supremacy has done, this veneer, right.

When we look under it, everything is crumbling. Once we stop choosing White supremacy, we'll all be better. And I say that as a person of color, right. There are some things that I need to unlearn. There are things I need to unlearn within my community that's going to help me to heal and get rid of White supremacy.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Before the hour started, we were having a discussion about schools and school systems that I think you said 85% of teachers -- I read 93% of teachers --

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Listen. (Laughing)

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: In this country where White women, taught by White women, teaching texts by White men. And that we get these kids who are coming in with all of their skills and greatness and the things they have learned into a White supremacist school system where tests are written by White folk

and achievement gaps are -- everything is based on Whiteness. And we wonder why our BIPOC kids are struggling with the achievement. But the achievement gaps are based on a White perspective. And I say, what would happen if that changed, if we flipped it, if 93% of the teachers were BIPOC teaching White kids about being a person of color, of different cultures?

My thought was that White kids would really struggle. And you had a different thought.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yeah. So, my thought was we'd all get free if that was the case. We would all be free. Black people, people of color, are really generous with our knowledge and expansive. And also, looking at White culture, if you can say there is a culture, there is just very much this narrow, very narrow thought, way of thinking. When you include the experiences of people on the margins, right, then we have so much expansiveness and so much rich rigor, and so much rich experiences and so many more things to learn.

Very shameless plug, this is what I do. So if you want me to come to your school and talk to your teachers about how to make sure that the kids on the margins are centered, therefore making it good for everyone, look me up at littleuprisings.org.

It's my passion. I love doing it. I have a child of color. I want every kid of color to be able to do this.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: I want you to write books, and have TV shows.

(Laughter)

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Bring her in. There are so many things I have learned from getting to know you and listening to you having the conversation with the kids. This notion that by including others, we lose out, as opposed to gaining something. I mean, the thought of, like -- the thought of homogenizing scares me.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yeah.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: I am so obsessed with other people's culture, their food, traditions, histories, music, dances. I would never, ever want to be like them. But I want to enjoy who they are. So for me, the idea of race is something to be revered as opposed to something to be scared of.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yes. Absolutely. I would also say, you know, before we end, there was a part in the play that said -- they used the word Black very pejoratively. It was used as a pejorative. And I would encourage everyone -- I don't think this is just for White parents -- everyone to examine our own

anti-Blackness, because it shows up in our everyday lexicon when we talk about a black sheep. All of these things mean something. There is a book called Black Is a Rainbow and it's a beautiful book. And it's all about Blackness.

I suggest -- I would say for everyone to get it. You can get it out your library. Because I think that's the thing that we need the most of is just tackling our own anti-Blackness.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Tell us your website.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: littleuprisings.org.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Great. Check her out, everyone. Thank you so much. It's been so great getting to know you.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Thank you. This was great.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Stay connected, I know.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Yeah.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: A big thank you to Gottabees and the Wheelock Family Theater for hosting this event. Congratulations to the 41 theaters for young audiences who collaborated on getting A Kids Play About Racism out there. I am Michael Bobbit. I'm sorry we adults messed up the world for you guys. You guys will fix it, especially if those five kids are leading the country. So, thank you all so much and we will see you at some other event some other time. Thank you.

>> TANYA NIXON-SILBERG: Come back on, you guys. Say
good-bye.

>> MICHAEL BOBBITT: Waving. There you are. Take care.

(Session concluded at 5:01 p.m. ET)

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