

## **Next Steps LEARN session summary**

### **By Rebecca Lustig**

The third LEARN session of the 2019-20 [Next Steps](#) series was held on March 25 via Zoom video, led by sociologist of education and Evanston parent Dr. John B. Diamond. This year, the series is grounded in the book *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

This was the third and final LEARN session of the series. Upcoming ACT sessions, specific to individual District 65 schools, will be held via Zoom. View the [website](#) for meeting times and registration information.

This third session in particular was focusing on antiracist action. It consisted of Diamond lecturing and then a Q&A session, which District 65 Board of Education Vice President and Next Steps Planning Committee member Anya Tanyavutti helped facilitate.

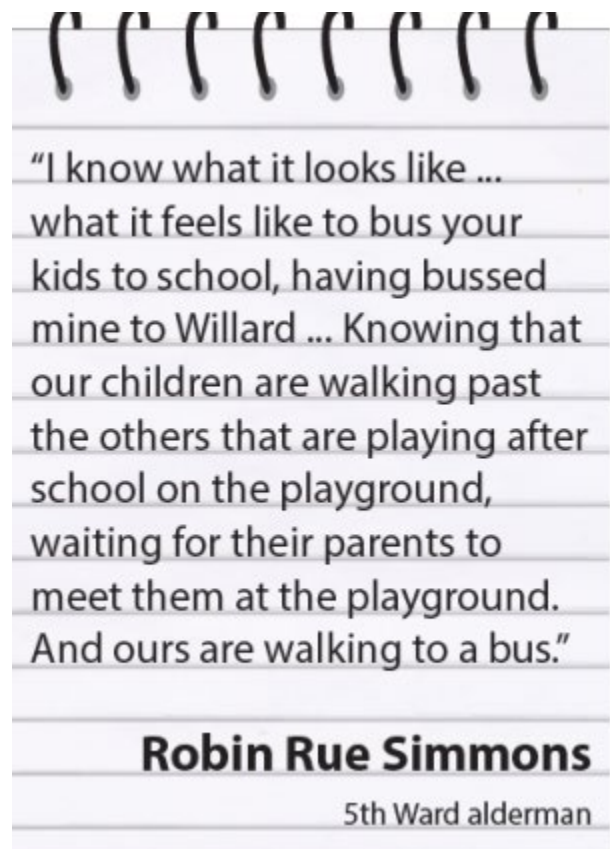
#### Reviewing terms and information

- The History of Race
  - “Race is a *social construction* that emerged to justify slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, and genocide”
  - The categorization of race began in the 1400s
  - Race has no genetic basis
  - “Race is deeply intertwined with ideas about intelligence, moral worth, and criminality.”
  - [Video of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi Speaking](#)
    - There is a constant power struggle between racist and anti-racist
    - Belief that ignorance and hate caused production of racist ideas that produced racist policies
    - History shows that racist policies leading to racist ideas that justified these racist policies.
    - Power struggle between those demanding racial privilege for a few and those demanding equal opportunity for all
    - Change policies instead of people to “win” the struggle
- Changing Hearts and Minds
  - “The source of racist ideas [is] not ignorance and hate but self interest” Kendi
  - Traditional model: Racist ideas -> racist policies and practices -> racist outcomes
  - Racist policies and practices are at part at the root of how racism manifests itself, but once they interact, they become self-fulfilling, more circular

- Status Beliefs
  - Status beliefs are “widely shared cultural beliefs that those who belong to one social group are more esteemed and competent than those who belong to another social group”
  - Spread by watching people interact
  - Children are conscious of race at 3-4 years old, are aware of stereotypes at 8-9
  - Observing social interactions of status beliefs causes people to reinforce them
- Opportunity Hoarding
  - Opportunity hoarding is “the process through which dominant groups who have some control over some good regulate its circulation thus preventing other groups from having access to it”
  - The result of people using their structural advantage to hoard opportunity

#### Education and Policy [~17:30]

- Redlining in Evanston
  - The racial composition of 5th ward is predominantly people of color
  - This was the ward that lost their school
  - In 2012, there was a referendum for a school in 5th ward
    - 67.4% of 5th ward residents voted yes
    - Less people from other wards did
    - The lowest percentage of residents who voted yes for a 5th ward school were in the 6th and 7th ward
    - Overall 45.5% of Evanston residents voted yes
- There tends to be resistance to policies that are rooted in anti-racism
  - De tracking math at D65 and D202 is an example of implementing antiracist policy
    - It took longer than it needed to because there was resistance
  - Earned honors at ETHS
    - Talk of “white flight”
    - A lot of effort had to be put in to study implementation of mixed level courses because of resistance from white parents
- Complicating antiracist policies: policies are shaped by race in their implementation
  - The state required three levels of math with the intention of all students taking Algebra 1, then Geometry, then Algebra 2
    - Instead, some districts backed up to start at Pre-Algebra



- Others created parallel tracks
  - There was traditional track and a track with watered down versions of the classes
- Others created spurs where students would take Pre-Algebra and possibly Geometry and then a different course

Opened up a dialogue- Participants asked questions in the chat, Dr. Diamond answered [~30:00]

- “Can you provide examples of white parents who consider themselves to be anti-racist in practice, yet unknowingly were supporting racist policies within the school district?”
  - Parents think they are doing things in the interest of all kids but really they are just doing things in the interest of their own
  - Methods of protecting privilege
  - Rationalizing monopolizing educational opportunity
    - Rationalization sometimes focus on being not racist as opposed to antiracist
    - Examples of rationalizing
      - I live in Evanston so I’m “not racist”
      - Resisting and trying to rationalize tracking
      - Rationalizing percentage of students in AP classes because those students just come from backgrounds with more resources (even though it is actually related to race)
      - Rationalize testing itself as a good marker of success in education at a higher level
  - It takes a lot of work to unpack biases people hold
    - People hold many identities
    - People are sometimes unaware of the biases that they hold
      - Example: White parents often choose schools based on the racial makeup of the school; Educators hold lower expectations for students of color
    - Important to recognize how our identities shape our understanding and actions
- Can you talk about the transition to e-learning and racial implications? [~38:00]
  - Schools are doing a lot more than just educating students
    - Feeding students
    - Students have a place to be during the day
  - Some students have access to resources that others do not
    - It is better at ETHS where everyone has a chromebook, but not everyone has wifi
    - There are other places where transition to e-learning is more difficult
  - Some people’s life circumstances does not allow them not to work
  - Research shows that people are treated differently based on their race by police and by those in the field of health care.

- “As a Black person who has been swimming in the “Kool-Aid” all my life, what can I do to counteract the racist policies and practices?”
  - Social movements are rooted in social protest that pushed for policy change that pushed for structural change
    - Agitation, long-term efforts, policy change efforts
    - However, our education system tends to teach that change happens from working within the system
  - Movements benefit to some extent with some effort from white people
    - Example: Over the last two years, people in Madison are protesting to get police out of schools. People of color who were being threatened online had white allies who would stand in front of them at the board meetings while they were speaking to protect them.
  - A deep commitment to keeping that work going
  - Policy change is a step but it’s not enough, it requires a lot of pressure
  
- Can you expand on specifics around a model of change of agitation and working with those within systems who can give direction to how to use the system to make change?
  - Outside voices from outside of the organization, such as the NAACP, can be powerful
  - Teachers and administrators are on the front line to be able to push for change and they must be clear-eyed about resistance
  
- As a Black man, what have you grappled with in terms of “respectability” in your life and work?
  - This is connected to Kendi’s concept of moral-suasion.
  - There’s always going to be resistance to movements for racial justice
  - It’s hard for people not to critique your approach instead of focusing on the oppression itself
  - Examples of “respectability” still being criticized
    - People in suits and ties in Selma did not stop brutality
    - Colin Kaepernick kneeling was not respectable enough
    - Ex of university that prevented students of color from doing research on racial oppression that involved talking to young people of color
  
- Is opportunity hoarding a new idea? Did it come about with the ideas of racial justice with education? [~57:00]
  - OH: a way to understand the role that groups play in creating inequality. Applied to education: shift lens away from looking at what minoritized youth and families are doing and to what whites and middle and upper class folks utilize their position to monopolize educational opportunity.
  - The process is not new
    - Suburbanization is an example
    - Native American boarding schools to “civilize” children
    - The outlawing of education during slave era

- The concept and formulation is relatively new and more recent in applying it to education
    - The term has been used, and applied to education within the last 20 years
- Are you aware of any universities that have pushed back on ETHS courses and their method of earned honors?
  - Diamond is not sure exactly
  - People should still value the extra work that still goes into earning honors
- “District 65 is trying to change hearts and minds with professional development i.e. Beyond Diversity, SEED, etc. Wouldn’t it be more effective to change policies?”
  - It’s not an either/or
  - If there are efforts for policy change and people aren’t thinking differently, then those efforts won’t be as effective
  - Example of one school who focused on hearts and minds exclusively and another who focused on changing policies exclusively. Both could have benefitted from a little of the other
- Are you aware of any relevant implementations of anti-racist policies in Evanston? [~1:05]
  - Diamond: This is where we benefit from people in the audience who are a part of taking those actions
  - Tanyavutti’s answer
    - Some conversations are now delayed at D65 school board meetings
    - It’s important to think about now
      - How we think about antiracism in the context of a quarantine, economy, schools are meant to provide many social services, the vulnerabilities that we are now asking parents to shoulder
      - Grappling with childcare - providing a hub for child care means people who need this don’t benefit from social distancing
      - How systematic racism shows up in special education
- “When you think about your own experience as a parent in the district, Dr. Diamond, what stands out as priority anti-racist changes you’d like to see?” [~1:13]
  - The ways in which the system could be serving people better
  - When Diamond first moved to Evanston, there was a dumbing down of academic curriculum in some spaces that Dr. Diamond didn’t see in his previous district
  - A lot of young people fall through the cracks in a large place such as ETHS
    - We need to pay attention when school staff accept when some students are struggling, and intervene when other students are struggling. These are racialized and class-based decisions. Are we comfortable with some kids not doing well?
    - We need to advocate for a rigorous curriculum for as many kids as possible.

- Can you speak more to recommendations for white parents who are unknowingly supporting racist policies and practices? [~1:18]
  - Folks of color do a lot of educating and engaging around the issues
  - When white racial actors recognize and challenge issues (despite the social costs), it becomes a powerful mechanism for change, sometimes this runs up against self-interest but benefits the whole community
  - Constant process of action, feedback, reflection, action, etc
  - Some people like the label, but what is required is doing things that make a difference and being open to the feedback when you're going in the wrong direction - this is a deeper commitment that allows us to grow. None of us knows the answer. We can all be justice-oriented.
  - Continue the work outside of these moments
  
- “Do you have any advice around capacity building and tactics for organizing and advocacy re: attaining educational equity?”
  - Understand the history of movement activism
  - Look to literature and spaces where work is ongoing
  
- “How do you define what makes curriculum rigorous enough?”
  - Tanyavutti's answer
    - I think we have a bit of an obsession with rigor that is rooted in competition and ideas about status beliefs
  - Diamond's answer
    - It depends on the context of the classroom
    - It's a combination of the content, the teaching, and the students
    - Education is not just about test scores or college, but to discern information, to participate in democracy, to interrogate information, data literacy
  
- A question posed for anyone to answer: How have questions about antiracism risen for people in the global pandemic amongst quarantine and an economic crisis?
  - One person finds themselves asking what more they can do
  - What more can be done that feels more like solidarity and less like charity?
  - Pressure for actions like a rent freeze.
    - Click [here](#) for an Evanston call for rent freeze.
  - How might we as a community create an opportunity where we can benefit from each other's expertise?
    - Seeing children as all of our children
    - [www.evanstonaid.com](http://www.evanstonaid.com)
    - [ETHS Student Union COVID 19 response](#)