

E2: Talking to Young Kids About the Uprising Following George Floyd's Murder - Part 1 of 3

Co-hosts: SooJin Pate and Hannah Carney

Guest: Daniel Shannon

Intro (music by Mike Myth Productions):

SooJin: Welcome to the antiracist parenting podcast where we're working to create an antiracist world for ourselves, our children and future generations to come.

Hannah: We are Hannah Carney and SooJin Pate. And we're coming to you not as experts but as parents who want to share our missteps and successes in raising antiracist children. Thank you for being on this journey with us as we work together to build a community of antiracist parents who are raising a generation of antiracist kids.

SooJin: Welcome to the Antiracist Parenting Podcast. We are so excited to invite you to our inaugural episode. And for this episode one we are actually starting out with a three part series on how to talk to your children about this moment of uprising and of racial reckoning. And what do we mean by racial reckoning? Well, here are some definitions. It's an accounting for things that have been done, a settling of accounts based on an amount owed or due. And it's also defined as the avenging or punishing of past misdeeds or mistakes. And Hannah, did you want to say a little bit about what you when you think about the word or the phrase racial reckoning what it makes you think of?

Hannah: Yeah, I think for me, the thing that sticks out the most is around being forced to deal with whatever the issue or problem might be. And that really resonates with me right now. of like not being able to to ignore what is happening around us.

SooJin: Yes, and so because of that, we wanted to make sure that we allotted enough time and space to talk about that within the context of the various ages of our children. So this three part series, we're going to first today begin talking about kids in the elementary age group. And then the second episode of the series will be focused on kids in the junior high. And then the third part of the series is focused on high school students. So given that we're, we're starting today off with elementary kids. And Hannah, can you provide us with like, what our intention is for today?

Hannah: Yeah, so it's important to me to begin this conversation by setting an intention. I think that for today, what I'd like to share is just coming to the conversation with, you know, bringing your stories and also being open to listening to other people's stories around antiracist parenting, especially as it relates to elementary age kids. And I would invite you and our guest if you'd like to add to our intention for today.

SooJin: Yeah. So we have a very, very special guest with on our inaugural episode. Mr. Daniel Shannon is with us. And so Daniel, do you mind sharing a little bit about yourself? And then yeah, whatever intentions that you might have for today?

Daniel: Yeah, definitely. First and foremost, thank you all so much for having me. I'm excited for this conversation. I'm excited to be here with you all, and I'm excited for the work that may come out of this for the good that may come out of this work. A little bit about myself, I am a long-term diversity and inclusion practitioner. I am Gail Shannon's son. I'm Traci's husband, Ella and Asa's dad. And I'm also a founder and owner of Daniel Shannon speaks, which is a training and development company that helps individuals and groups add spaces in place where they have value based on the things that make them unique. And I also work for Target Corporation as a diversity and inclusion practitioner there as well. So that's a little bit about my background.

Intention for today. I think a good intention is around honesty and vulnerability. I think that these are conversations that I often find myself having to manage myself so that I'm not saying anything that might be offensive. And I think that that's important. But I think sometimes that can be done at the expense of, of the words that actually need to be said. And so my intention would be, to be very honest and to be vulnerable. And I hope that it would, in turn, encourage others to exercise that same, those same practices and, and ultimately that this may result in people thinking differently about how they inform their children and decisions that they make with regard to parenting and just citizenship in general.

SooJin: Fantastic. Thanks so much for that. So Daniel our primary question for this episode is what conversations have you been having with your children about the uprising about the racial reckoning about what's taking place in this moment?

Daniel: Yes. So I've been noodling on that question for about probably 14 hours or so. Because I, as we connected earlier, knowing that would be the topic today. And I think what occurred to me is a really, really important truth that I think is a strong characteristic of how we got to this moment. Is that if we are if we're just now starting conversations about race in response to this moment, you know, it's, it's never too late, but it's a very different conversation if that's the case. And I was having a hard time with the question at first, because I realized that in my home with my children, there have not been a whole lot of conversations related specifically to the most recent murders of black bodies by white supremacists and police. And it certainly has been a part of the conversation but I think for answering this question, I will actually give you some context. Before my wife and I had children, worth saying my wife and I are both alum of an historically black university, Howard University in Washington DC, which SooJin I know, you know, well as a fellow alum.

SooJin: H-U!

Daniel: You Know!

SooJin: We had to do it.

Daniel: We had to. If we, if we didn't, if we would have passed that, we would have to start over. That's a very special place for a number of reasons that deserves its own podcast. So I will not to go too deep into that. But the context is important. Because it is important data points within that to help understand who we are and what's important to us what we prioritize. Before we even had children, something that just occurred to us was and you learn this sort of one of the things that comes out of a space like Howard is, is you begin to undo a lifetime worth of conditioning. Meaning that, that occurs in terms of understand the way you understand yourself, the way you see the world, the way you see yourself in the world, all of those things being their own components as opposed to their own different entities. And my senior year, my last semester, one of my favorite classes that I took at Howard was, was with Dr. Harrell, it was Race and Racism. At the time he was a director of the psychology department. I was an economics major, but I was just taking electives at that point. And one of the things I remember coming out of that class, and he wrote a book called Manichean Psychology, which would recommend it if you're interested as it's a great way of understanding racism and how it impacts the brain and decisions we make. I remember him having the conversation about just our own conditioning and how that conditioning has informed the way we understand ourselves and the way the world understands us and so on and so forth. And I remember asking the question in class, after an entire segment of talking about the impacts of this conditioning – I asked the question, what is the alternative to that conditioning? Or what do we do to sort of undo these things that are inherently within us? And I was anticipating like that there will be some scientific tool that existed or some I don't know, magic trick, or whatever hypnosis. And his answer was very simply counter-conditioning. And his answer was very simply, counter conditioning is a critical piece. And so I give you that context, because it's something that's always stuck with me even before my wife and I had kids and just the way that as, as people of African descent, the two of us the things that keep us up at night about the thoughts of bringing black children into this world and just how they the stuff they will be up against and my children and my daughter is the oldest and so you know, there are several layers of that of her being a woman and also being black and the messages about herself that she will be inundated with from the moment that she can open her eyes and perceive what's in front of her. And so we have been very, very deliberate about establishing since birth, a strong layer of conditioning for her that really promotes self-love that really promotes self-assuredness, confidence, and those things really heavily rooted in and really over indexing, and the elements of her being that will otherwise be challenged by the world that she'll have to navigate most of her life. So specifically, her identity as a woman, and specifically her identity as a as a woman of African descent. And so for her entire lifetimes, one of my favorite books and a book I used to read to her every single night and still read to her. It's a book called, I'm a Pretty Little Black Girl. And it's a beautiful poem. It's a children's book clearly, but it's written in the form of a poem and at the end of every stanza the little girl in the book shouts, "I'm a pretty little black girl." And I'll make Ella with a cheer - so at the end of every page, we yell as loud as we can at the top of our lungs. I let her yell at bedtime. "I'm a pretty little black girl!" And I love it. She puts her hands up and she cheers. And it's a celebratory moment, but it's a ritual in our home every single night of her saying yelling, I'm a pretty little black girl. So the images, the books, we've been really, really deliberate about what kind of cartoons she's even been allowed to watch because subtly,

just the type of – it creates an understanding of what's beautiful. It creates an understanding of her relationship with beauty and her proximity to it. And so there are some things that are very popular that she has never seen, and probably won't until she can choose to see them herself. The toys that come into our home, especially the books that we read to her a lot. My daughter is now at a very young age she will start kindergarten in the fall of 2020. And she can already read she can read as well as I was able to read at probably seven or eight years old and she just turned five a few months ago. And I give my wife credit for that, and the time we spend together. So images, books, movies, toys, if we have toys, that are people, if they're not like it's not a car or a butterfly or animal or something like that. It typically is a toy the person typically has some amounts of melanin, and like black dolls, but all of those different things and so, ultimately normalizing blackness in a world where blackness as far as she will experience it will otherwise tell her that that her blackness is sub human or superhuman kind of one or the other. But instead really spending the time to normalize it with her so that by the time she becomes inundated by those messages that we have less control over, it's not a counter-conditioning that needs to occur but that narrative, in fact, will be contrary to what is normal to her. And the same is true for my son who is younger, but I'm using my daughter as an example because that's when became parents. And so, all of that context to get to the point of your question around the moment that we are in, we are we're mindful about what kind of images she sees, just because again, she's five and, and as important as it is for me to give her a strong sense of self with regard to her blackness and with regard to her being a woman and with regard to being my child and all of those things. I don't want to do that at the expense of giving her the opportunity to be human and a human who was five years old, just has a special level of innocence, no matter what their background is, no matter what their core is, and I'm wanting to protect that and so we don't spend a whole lot of time talking about details that that police officers kill black people. And yet because that in and of itself is as a fact is not exclusively true, and I don't I don't want to I don't want to feed her with some of the some of the biases that I'm aware of that exists within me. I want to give her the opportunity to adopt her own belief system and her own have her own experiences and and yet I find myself challenged when she comes home from preschool with a sticker that's a badge because of the police came to her preschool today and they learned about how the police are their friends and and I remember being a kid playing basketball and the police used to drive by with football cards and they used to give us like the Vikings cards and we were outside at the parks playing basketball. And probably until the age I was about 10 years old, they were really friendly. And I remember when I got old enough to be perceived as a threat by anybody you know no more football cards that our engagement changed dramatically. And I think about that with my son as well who is younger he's two years old and it occurs to me just how frequently people will stop and “oh, he's so handsome, he's so cute.” And he is, I think he knows it too it's ridiculous how cute my son is and my daughter both they're beautiful children. And, but I always find myself and I'm a little bit of a perhaps a little cynical in these moments, but I think it's just a protective nature about my children is, as I find myself there, I find myself we say thank you, I teach him to say thank you. And in my head and sometimes under my breath, I say I hope you feel that way when he's 14. And perhaps if he wants to spend some time with your daughter, I hope that's also okay. And but this these are the things that go through my head and I don't want to, I don't want to impose that on my children at five and two years old. I want them to simply be able to

exist in the goodness that is somebody thinks I'm beautiful somebody thinks I'm cute, because that's a really special thing. And it doesn't have a whole lot of layers, yet one day it will, unfortunately. And so that said, when we look at when we see, we're watching the news, and we're seeing large groups of people who were yelling and fires burning, and my daughter asked me what's wrong, and we're able to, we're able to really address it at a very at a very basic and fundamental level of well, those people are hurting. Why are they hurting daddy? Because injustice occurred, what is injustice daddy? And so it we get to it, we get to approach it at those levels. So we get to the point where when we get to the thing that actually happened, it's actually the tip of an iceberg that's sitting on an understanding of so many things that are much more critical and you know, Daddy, why did they kill him? And and that's a hard conversation for me to have. Just because you know, the emotional component, trying to balance the fact that I don't want her to have these biases because I do, because they exist within me. And I'm having to qualify well, some people feel this way. And when I guess the specific words that I use to her is it you know, she's familiar with history because we have a children's book about Martin Luther King that takes her all the way through his history and how he was ultimately shot and killed but how he worked for justice of black and brown people and poor people. So she's already developing an awareness of that. But I think what's much more important to me is at this age she knows that that lives on the foundation of just general injustice, and on kind of right versus wrong and good versus bad and understands that this is one of the components of that, but I'm having so that's a super duper long answer. But trying to give you all the context we can, I'm sure there's more conversation to be had here.

SooJin: Yeah, no, thank you. So much for that, and it's a loaded question. Which requires, like a setting of the table, right in order to be able to fully answer that question. So thank you for for taking the time to set that table for us.

Daniel: Sure. Thanks.

SooJin: Yeah. So, one of the questions that people have asked, and I know Hannah and I, we spoke about this earlier is some people believe that talking to your kids about these things at this early of an age is too early. Curious about what you think of that.

Daniel: Yeah, I disagree. I think we often underestimate what young people are perceiving in the first place. And so the idea that our children are not picking up on us having an emotional response to something that is occurring in our world. The idea that our children are not picking up on, on the anger that has been communicated across, you know, pick your channel, various mediums. The idea that that my children don't pick up on the fact that they feel invisible in certain places or the idea that my children don't recognize that they are one of perhaps are the only black children in various spaces where we find ourselves and whether it's a part of their daycare or at a playground or whatever the case might be living in Minnesota where you know, there's not an abundance. My wife is from North Carolina, so our kids spend a lot of time in the south in the summer in particular, and it's not lost on them the difference in and my son is funny even before he turned two years old. I think you could you started to recognize a bias in him for just out of familiarity. For brown men in particular, because he like lives on my

shoulders he spends that's where he spends all his time. And if we're in a large crowd, we're church or any just any of the spaces where there are other brown people that's familiar to him. And I can I have, I can recall a specific moment when we moved into a new neighborhood and we were meeting some of our neighbors and one of our neighbors is as an Indian man who's a dark skin, Indian man, and he was the only other brown man in the room, and then everyone else was white. And I remember my son just trying to suss out the situation like what who was who, because new people, kids, you know, they have great discernment when it comes to new people. And I remember him when I sat him down because I had to pick up so I had to carry something. He went over to my to my neighbor who was Indian, the dark skinned Indian man, and just stood by him said, this feels like a safe place if daddy is busy. And again, we had all just met that day, but they pick up on these things is the point that I'm making. And so it's not lost. And so the idea of not having these conversations is really a missed opportunity for us to contextualize the experiences that they're already having. And really the onus is on us to put it in terms that makes sense and their world but that are also effective for them as they're developing the tools themselves to articulate their experience and to understand it in such a way that does not perpetuate any level of self hatred or any level so they don't start to adopt any of these narratives in a way that will be harmful to them as they matriculate as they grow and so on. So no it's not too so and and I think it's really critical. Again, you don't have to deal with all of the nuance within it quite yet because they don't have the they don't have the point of reference to process all of that nuance in a healthy way. But they do understand good and bad they understand right and wrong and you can explain justice you can explain injustice, you can explain love and hate. And it's really is enough sometimes to say, baby sometimes people have hate in their heart and hate in their heart will make them do a lot of bad things. And some times people who have hate in their heart the bad things that they do - they choose to direct that hate towards people because they're different. And in this case, there are some white police officers or there are white supremacists who, who had hate in their heart and they made a decision to hurt him because he had different skin than them. And there's a sadness that comes with that, but they can process it really as a matter of absolute fact. And you can also close the loop by saying, baby, there are good people too, and we have good in our heart. And that's why it's important for us to do good. And this is what justice looks like. And it becomes an opportunity to actually really promote some additional conditioning around "what does goodness look like?" "What does it look like to be an antiracist?" Because that doesn't, that doesn't have to start when you're, when you're 30 something years old and you're, you're shaken to your core, because it occurs to you that there has in fact been systemic racism that has harmed people of color people who are marginalized in the United States since the country's existence since its beginning. So that can actually start when you're a child. And for you know, unfortunately, for a lot of brown people in particular that does start when they're when we're kids because we have those experiences when the police stop giving us football cards and start asking us what we're doing in this neighborhood - with the basketball in our hand on the basketball court, I'm playing basketball in this neighborhood officer, and when that's no longer an acceptable answer, but without having had those conversations at a younger age, and you don't you may not know how to process that moment in a way that's healthy, and ultimately perpetuating a cycle and perpetuating even experiences that may cause harm to you.

Hannah: Yeah, this is like really making me think a lot too, just reflecting on the conversations I've been having with my kids. So I identify as a white woman, and I'm married to a white man, and we have two white boys, as of right now, ages five and six. And I feel like we've spent, like, we have been very honest about describing what is happening. And we have brought our kids to protests so that they can kind of gain a better understanding about just everything that is around them. And also, you know, they'll ask a question like - why are we here? Like, why are we at this protest? And what I've been trying to message to them is that, you know, what we're doing here is not only standing up for justice, but also this is our work like this is your lifelong work and modeling that. And so the other thing that I've been really focused on even since birth, like what you're saying, Daniel - there's really never too early of an age to start doing antiracist parenting. Just like the exposure to all different types of people, and especially like, ensuring that teachers and leaders that they come across have different skin color and different backgrounds, talking about difference like very positively and having really diverse friend groups. And so I think that like, you know, when you talk about like, understanding concepts of like, injustice versus justice, like, my kids tend to use the terms like, what's fair, what's not fair, but kind of in that general same idea of like "what's fair," I feel like when you have friends of color and you're also given these words in these terms in this context, like, when you already are like when you have a connection and you care about people who look like people who are hurting. That's, I think that can add a level to how we can shape that conversation. And so, I guess that's just kind of a reflection that as you talk, I'm like thinking about, you know, the, the questions my kids ask and like, it makes me really think about like what are we doing, how can we continue to build relationships, but also make connections that will help them to grow and take ownership of like - what is their role? What responsibility do they have? And Tony, my older one who is six, he's like I wish I had a Black Lives Matter sign that was big enough for the world. And I'm like, Yes. Like, let's do that. And so even just thinking - we talk a lot about writing books or coming up with a poem or something like that. Or like building a house and, you know, they're like, I'm going to build a house that wheelchairs can get into that people with all different skin color will feel welcome. And so there's this piece about imagining too that, I think is important in this parenting conversation - about what are we working towards? We know we're not satisfied with what's happening now and having the tools to talk about that and to grieve and to grapple and move through that pain and also to build like this imagination of what world do we want to live in and what would that look like what would it feel like so anyway, that's just some reflections from what I'm hearing from you.

Daniel: I appreciate that I actually hearing you talk about your children it makes me think a little bit about again, going back to my daughter because she's the oldest and all of these things are true with my son as well but it's just a different context, but she - a lot of her playmates from school or daycare, those kinds of things end up being, you know, they're often white. And I'm reminded of in W.E.B Dubois in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, one of the first essays in that book, he talks about the double consciousness that black people have to have. And I think it's true for everybody but it's uniquely true for people of African descent in America. He talks about one how they see themselves a recognition and a self awareness around how they see themselves. And then the double consciousness of always having to be aware of how the world sees them, and making the distinction between the two. And when it comes to the thought of

antiracist parenting. Something that I'm ultra sensitive about, is making sure that my children are surrounded by people, both other adults and other children who behave towards them in a way that affirms and really reaffirms those same images of self that we are being very deliberate to instill in our children. And especially, I'm super sensitive about it with little white boys. And because I recognize again that for my daughter, who is right now a beautiful, sweet, innocent little black girl will one day be an adult black woman who will have to fight against all of the stereotypes that come with being a black woman. And we'll have to, hopefully, we'll make some progress before she gets there as for the work that we are all doing now, but wage gaps and opportunities for access and those kinds of things and the entitlement that is frequently a function of the way that the world invites and receives and accepts whiteness among white children, creates this sense of entitlement for white children. I see that entitlement showing up when they play with my daughter. And, and I'm that parent at the playground that like that jumps in. And it looks like a helicopter parent or whatever the case but and it's always it's innocent, I'm happy to tell other people's children how they may or may not interact with my child. And I do so in a way that demonstrates the same love that I demonstrate for my own children. But and that's what it comes from. And also even more so to my children, Ella, if he's not nice to you, then he doesn't get the privilege of playing with you. Ella, you are beautiful, you're smart, you're so much fun. You are sweet. You are kind and only good people get to play with you. If people are not nice to you, they don't get to play with you. And but it's a matter of even teaching her to, to reject or to not accept that those social norms that ultimately perpetuate themselves throughout our lives and as adults you know we may have a different tolerance for them for whatever thing that we're trying to sustain whether it is employment or whatever the case but at five you have a choice and baby you don't have to be his friend. And if he's not nice to you he cannot be your friend. And so I'm always especially encouraged by and grateful for, um, you know, allies in form of parenting who when we can put our children side by side Hannah and they can go and have a great time and see each other's entire humanity. And really value that because ultimately I do want my daughter to grow up in a world where, where she does not have to be particularly conscious of, of potential playmates skin color, when she thinks about whether or not they'll be nice to her. And more important than that, to me is that she will never ever play with somebody or she will never seek the approval of somebody who has a different skin color, even at the expense of, of them treating her like an entire human.

SooJin: Beautifully, beautifully said, Daniel. Thank you. Wow.

Hannah: So I'm curious about your experience, SooJin, in parenting because your daughter is a little bit older.

SooJin: Yeah. She is a little bit older. So she's 12 now, but I remember, you know, when Mike Brown was killed, she was seven. And us having conversations around this. And so kind of like what Daniel was saying, we've laid the groundwork from the time she was born. So that, you know, these conversations weren't happening, like, out of the blue or for the first time when big national crises and trauma and tragedy happens. So, like I remember early on, when she was two years old, she had these little finger puppets, and one puppet was Harriet Tubman.

And one was Frederick Douglass. So already at two, you know, she knows about slavery. She knows about the Underground Railroad. It's already a part of her DNA about like black resistance and the importance of black liberation. So my daughter, she's mixed black. I am Asian American, I'm Korean and her father's African American black. So and she's fully both black and Korean. We don't really use the "half" terminology, because we are all full human beings. So she knew about injustice. She knew about fairness and all that stuff. And again, the history of how our nation and our country has treated black people historically. So, at seven years old, when Ferguson was happening, I remember, I was obviously sad and she's looking at me and she's like, you know what, what's wrong mama? And I said, you know, there's a lot of people hurting right now and are really sad right now because this this black boy was shot by the police in the middle of the street. And so she's like why did they do that? And I said, you know well you know because of like the history of how white people have seen black people, you know, they see them as threatening as scary as dangerous. And so it goes back all the way to slavery, sweetie, remember? We had those conversations and it goes back to you know, at this time she's in first grade, so she knows about - we've had talks about like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X and, and so like she also has that background with her so I'm referencing all the past conversations we've had. So after we talked about that, her first response was, are they going to kill daddy? And then immediately after that was, are they going to kill me? And at that point, I'm like oh, crap, maybe I shouldn't have said anything because like - going back to what you were saying, Daniel, it's like we're trying to, like on the one hand like they're kids and they have a right to be innocent, right? But on the other hand, it's also our job as parents to provide them with language and provide them with a space to process this stuff because they also see everything, they're sponges. And if we don't intervene, then they're making their own assumptions, right. They're using their own logic to make to come to their own conclusions. And, and so oftentimes those conclusions are wrong because the conclusion is there's something wrong with me, right? Like I did something wrong. It's because there's something inherently deficient or flawed in me that is leading to the way that I'm treated, or that is leading to the way that that people who look like me are treated. And so if we don't do that, as parents like interrupt that, then we're not doing our jobs. So it's that constant balancing. But in that moment, I had this like, oh, oh, shoot, like, you know, what, what am I doing here? But then I was able to compose myself, and then you know, be able to answer that that question that like, no, like, they're not going to kill daddy, no, they're not going to kill you. Why? Because daddy and I are very diligent and we work really hard to make sure that you're around people who like love you, who care for you, who value you and are making sure that you're safe. You know, whether it's school, whether it's home, whether it's out running errands, like you are always with somebody who is always going to be looking out for you. And same thing with daddy, you know, daddy has lived all this time. And he knows what strategies to use to keep himself safe. So those were just some ways to reassure her. But yeah, I will never forget that sinking kind of feeling where I'm like, oh gosh, did I make a huge mistake talking to her about this? I realized that in hindsight, no, because now at 12 years old, we're, you know, four years later, we're having a similar conversation about George Floyd, right, and her being able to remember, like, oh, yep, you know, we had this conversation about Mike Brown. And so we have this history, this foundation that I can keep referring to, because we have had these conversations from the moment she was born. It's part of her - and I would agree with Daniel that's why it's so

important that we have these conversations as early as possible with our children. Because that foundation will serve you well as they get older. As more things happen like this, like it already is happening, you know more black folks dying at the hands of white violence. George Floyd's murder didn't stop there, unfortunately.

Daniel: I appreciate that so much, Soojin, I appreciate the passion, the enthusiasm, the thoughtfulness around just your thoughts, if we have time it made me think of some additional things as well.

Soojin: Yeah.

Daniel: Your daughter asking are they going to kill my daddy? Are they going to kill me? That question, it keeps me up at night. It haunts me. And I'll tell you why, and this is again going back to my intention of being vulnerable perhaps, is because I could not look my children in the eyes and tell them no. If my children asked me, daddy are they going to kill you? I could not look my daughter in the eyes and tell her no they are not. And I'll go further and I'll tell you – it is profound and absurd maybe, but certainly profound how much time I lose imagining different scenarios where I might be murdered because of white supremacy as a Black man. There are times when I'm sitting in my back yard, my wife and I live just outside of the city, and we have been blessed – we have a pretty nice home. It's not even the nicest home in the neighborhood, but I can certainly imagine the police not believing that I live here. And there are times when I think to myself, I can't call the police. Because if they come here, and they think something violent is occurring, they are not going to believe that this is my house. They are going to immediately identify me as an assailant. And I think about times that I'm sitting out in the back yard with the fire pit, and I'll be out there by myself sometimes just working at night, fielding emails. And I'll find myself having a moment of concern, I should probably put the fire out it's getting late. If any of my neighbors call the police because of the fire, the police will probably come around the corner and shoot me. Which is just a crazy thought, but I imagine so many different scenarios. And then to your point about your daughter's father having figured out some different strategies. I spend a lot of time trying to mitigate what occur to me as potential risks. And I can't tell my children no they're not going to kill us. Because I don't know that that's a fact. So some of the stuff that I have kept from them at this young age, is not only about protecting their innocence, but it's also protecting me from having to tell them something, you know, I'm not ready for them to be haunted by that yet. That will unfortunately occur to them in their own time. What it reminded me of was generational trauma being passed down. And some amount of that is through narratives, through stories, through experiences, but there are actual parts of that that are DNA.

I lived in Chicago when I finished undergrad. I lived in a really, really rough neighborhood. And, you know, I'm always really careful about how I talk about the experience because there's a narrative that has been already, I don't want to perpetuate a narrative that's negative. And I don't want to underplay what my experience was either. So I find myself in the tension of those two things when I talk about this. But I lived in a really bad neighborhood where there was quite a bit of violence, and death. And since that time, you know, more than 13 years ago now,

I still have nightmares of people shooting at me. And I remember a 14 year old kid was shot and killed right outside my window on September 14th, I think in 2007. And I still remember his name. I remember there's nothing worse than the sound of a mother discovering her son, who has been shot. And those kinds of things. Those are the things that I saw. Those are some of the you can couple that experience with the constant news of white supremacists and police who I say and as if there's an inevitable difference I say and only to make the distinction that not all police are white supremacists but those who are killing black people for being black are also white supremacists. Let me be clear, I'm not sorry. And I have nightmares still about being shot attacked and what's really, really crazy it probably started just this past year, but my daughter has come into our room in the middle of the night after having a nightmare and she would say they were shooting at us they were shooting and she you know, she uses it in past tense, she says somebody was trying to shot me. And we deal with it in the moment and she gets in bed with us and but it's heartbreaking because there's a part of me that wonders how much of that I know I've been able to make this so she doesn't see any images of any violence on TV, we keep any of that stuff from her. But we do have a book about Martin Luther King Jr. and at the end of the book it reads that Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and so on. And she understands that that ended his life. And so I think that that is the primary source of where those nightmares are coming from. But I can't help but to wonder just how the generational trauma has informed even her subconscious, that when I think about the decade of nightmares that I have before she's even born, about being shot at and being murdered by police, that, that that is now in her four and five year old subconscious, also invading her sense of peace and her sense of wellness. And, again, I think as much as possible, when we talk about how do you then solve that it really is a matter of counter-conditioning. It's a matter of loving yourself and to your point we are responsible for teaching our kids to have the vocabulary or having the tools I agree with that. And I really think at this age has a lot to do with understanding self affirmation as much as possible. It's I don't want you to see yourself in the way that the world may perceive you one day or maybe perceives you now, but I want you more than anything I want you to know who you are. I want you to know that you are my children. I want you to know that you are protected that you are loved. I want you to know that you are created in your Creator's image and that you are that you are protected, that you are safe and that bad things might happen. But I couldn't tell them that that wouldn't be the case. And so when you were right when you were talking, I wrote down just a couple of things. I was thinking about what some of that counter-conditioning looks like. I talked a little bit about the books, but I have a Black History Month playlist. We play it probably every Saturday morning together but the very first song on there is a Kendrick Lamar "I love myself." And it's the same kind of cadence as I'm a Pretty Little Black Girl and this is my favorite thing to watch my daughter - we have little dance parties in our kitchen. To see her shout and at the top of her lungs and my son now too, I love myself. Now, it's a really, really special thing and managing bias with my son because my wife is darker skinned, she's very Brown. And you know, I grew up in Minnesota, and when I went to DC for undergrad, so Howard is famous for a lot of things. And one of the many things that it has some reputation for is just the number of beautiful people who matriculate through Howard University.

SooJin: True, true, true.

Daniel: That's all I'm going to say about that.

SooJin: A lot of gorgeous people there.

Daniel: As an 18 year old, you know, you got to pull yourself together. I did graduate, Magna Cum Laude it worked out for me, but you know, you got to manage that early. Anyway, in Minnesota though, where there's a high concentration of multiracial people. I developed a bias I'm aware of for fair skinned women I think growing up. And kind of undoing that conditioning upon getting to getting to see just the plethora of what beautiful looks like and all the different shades that comes in and getting out of Minnesota. Already starting with my son, who has already started to demonstrate a bias for fair skinned women as well. I think just by natural just by the degree of where you know where he lives and where he spends time and every time every single time I'm really intentional about it as a dark skinned woman who are dark skinned girl or even a friend of his and I'll always get down real close to him and pull him in close and say Asa, isn't she pretty? Asa, look at her hair. Oh, she's got skin like Mommy's. Isn't she pretty Asa? Like just trying to start to plant those seeds. Like look, son, that's beautiful too. And my son is he's dark. He's darker than I am. So he's going to have a similar brown skin tone. But and you know to be fair, you know, it's all of this is done in the spirit of trying to perpetuate self love. And I'm being very careful to not ever send a message of otherizing people who do not identify in the same way that we do. My son's godmother is actually she's biracial. So she's Native Hawaiian, of Asian descent, and white. And so some of his bias is very natural as he spends you know, as he loves his godmother as much as he loves anybody. And rightfully so. And so wanting to always honor that. We have people in our lives who come from all kinds of backgrounds and we love them and they have immense value just in the same way that we were created by our Creator and our Creator's image so are they but let's not ever forget that we are too and that this world may tell you something different sometimes let it never be lost on you who you are. And who is you are.

SooJin: Oh, wow, Daniel, that's it's this, this is exactly what this podcast is about. It's about getting parents to parent in the way that you just have articulated this whole episode. So, like, thank you for being that model for us. One thing I want to say to circle back on is like, I realized that I was lying to my child when I when I answered her saying yes, like when she asked are they going to kill daddy? Are they going to kill me? I remember asking myself like, okay, am I going lie to my child right now? Because and it's something that I try not to lie to her. It's yeah, I in everything I do. I try not to lie to her, but I remember making the conscious choice - I'm going to lie to you right now. Because the expression in her voice, the expression on her face was like, if I tell her the truth, like this could be a defining moment that is going to change the trajectory of her life. Like, in a negative way. And so I chose to lie at that moment. Yeah and I totally respect, you know, Daniel, you kind of putting a pause on that conversation, because you're not ready to tell the truth. So yeah.

Daniel: Yeah and I think what occurs to me - I hope you didn't feel any kind of way, judged.

SooJin: No, not at all. Nope.

Daniel: What occurs to me is that to your same point earlier that as parents we are responsible for equipping our children what is really important to me is that I know that in a very few years from now, so not very much time from even them at this young age, that I actually am going to have to explain to them, they might actually kill you. And that hurts. I hate that – that like legit breaks my heart. And what I need them to know that because of that as part of them being safe, that's part of me protecting them as a father as well. And it's the infamous it's almost become a cliché now that people talk about “the talk.” But the reason why I can't have that conversation now is because in a few years from now, I need you to know those rules. I need you to know the strategy to stay alive, because in a few years from now son they think you're cute, but we live in a neighborhood where I need everybody to know you and see you grow up because I don't want them calling the police on you when you're riding your bike to the park. And police who indeed might kill you, not because that's what police do. Police are not all bad. We have police in our family who we love and we support. However, there is a historical context that gives me very strong level of confidence and to be unapologetic about continuing to perpetuate that as a matter of safety for my children's well being. And so yeah, that's all I'll say about that, I guess rather than to go off further.

SooJin: This is heavy, heavy stuff. But this is exactly what this space is about is so that we can have these heavy conversations and just thank you so much for being so vulnerable, and sharing like your fears and the things that keep you up at night and it's real. Thank you.

Daniel: My pleasure. Thank you for the platform it's fun. I really, genuinely believe in the power of these conversations, in these narratives and these works. We are not victims, we are powerful. And this is an act of resistance is living well and living in the space of who you are. And so I'm committed to doing that every day in any space that I have the opportunity to do so. For the purpose of us, I'm experiencing the world that we deserve.

SooJin: Yes.

Hannah: So, transitioning from our conversation into sort of our closing. We have a few questions. First, wanting to make sure to give you an opportunity to talk about kind of anything you'd like to promote or either a project, endeavors, businesses, you know, however, whatever is comfortable for you. Where can listeners find you and what would you like to lift up in this moment?

Daniel: Thank you so much. That's very generous of you all to extend your space for me to share my stuff. Like I said, I have my own training and development company. Companies often hire me or individuals or groups will bring me in to do either individual coaching. But also topics around diversity and inclusion. Hopefully that's obvious by now that that's something that I spend some time I would consider myself a subject matter expert, but also in the area of general inspiration, teamwork, and I do work that helps - I help teams, get positive results out of problematic situations, and change management. All of that comes from my professional background. So it's, I like to tell people that I am a practitioner, not just a speaker. So I've

worked in various corporate spaces in large organizations for 17 years now. Eleven years in one of the largest CPG companies in the world, in various sales capacities and leadership roles, five years doing strategy, multicultural market developments and integrated marketing with a large financial services organization. And now I'm really deliberate in diversity, inclusion and equity practitionership with one of the largest employers in the country - with the largest companies. So I'm well practiced in these things and that's really what drives my, my expertise. It's not just theory. So the name of my company is Daniel Shannon Speaks. And you can find me at www.DanielShannonSpeaks.com I'm also on a few social media platforms on Facebook. I have a fan page it's just Daniel Shannon Speaks. Also have an Instagram and Twitter it's @DShannonSpeaks and probably Snapchat as well. I have these different platforms. I will profess I don't use them a whole lot but I am present on them. If you use them to contact me, then I will be responsive. And also you can email me at Daniel@DanielShannonSpeaks.com

And I got an album coming out. I'm just kidding, I don't. But I am an aspiring writer and one day there will be a book that accompanies that aspiration perhaps when my kids are a little older and require a little less of my attention. So keep an eye out for that though. The writing is in the works. I'm just excited to put it all together one day.

Hannah: Yes, we will definitely want to know when that day comes. So we're going wrap up with a few just sort of final quick you know, kind of whatever comes to mind first questions. Are you ready?

Daniel: The Lightning Round. Yeah. Let's do it.

Hannah: Okay, so fill in the blank antiracist parenting is...

Daniel: Critical. It's important, it's dope, it's necessary is it is the wave of the future. Get on board or miss the train.

Hannah: Okay, what's the last thing your child or children did to make you smile.

Daniel: This morning I came in from the garden and my son will scream at the top of his lungs and sprint from across the room – “DADDY!” He will run and jump in my arms and then he and my daughter like will race. I recognized not too long ago that it was no longer about me it was about them racing each other to see who could get to me the fastest. But it feels good. It feels good to hear them scream and yell and come and give me a big hug.

Hannah: Yes. What are you reading right now?

Daniel: I am actually catching up, I'm behind. We Were Eight Years in Power by another fellow Howard-ite, Ta Nehesi Coates. Just finished the chapter on “A Case for Reparations” this morning. And I'm super excited to pick up Isabel Wilkerson's new book, Caste. It's high on the list. And also high on the list is a fictional book which I don't get to a lot of fiction. I'd like to do more, but it's called Deacon King Kong. I haven't read it yet, but I'm excited to read that.

Hannah: Okay. What are you doing to take care of yourself?

Daniel: Not enough. I try to be sensitive and when doing things like this, because this it will live forever. So I try not to date it too much. But we are recording this in the time of a pandemic. And we are being very conservative about our exposure to the world. Because in addition to the two children who you've heard me talk about, we are expecting one more in a couple of months from now. And so, being very, very careful to make sure that we all stay healthy in our home and it's exhausting sometimes. So I actually took up gardening this past summer and that has been very therapeutic. So I mentioned being in the garden this morning, I went and harvested some of my leafy greens and some green beans and tomatoes. So gardening has been nice and I've been an athlete most of my life. I ran track all the way through college. So I still try to exercise pretty regularly and trying to sleep and spend time with people who care about me - who I care about, and spending time with my wife, especially and just cultivating, just cultivating those things that really sustain us.

Hannah: Yeah, thank you and congratulations. So exciting. Okay, two more questions. What is one thing you're committed to doing in your antiracist parenting journey?

Daniel: Being really unapologetic about self-love, teaching self-love, promoting self-love with regard to my kids' Blackness. There will be, there's a school of thought that suggests thought of teaching such - putting so much emphasis on love around Blackness might perpetuate some form of a thought around superiority. And I don't parent that way. I don't believe that will be the case. I think that for as much as I can strong arm a sense of self wellbeing. The world is a well oiled machine well practiced, and is waiting for the opportunity to teach my kids another message about themselves. And so I am very much committed to instilling a very strong and unapologetic sense of Blackness and self-love within them at every turn.

Hannah: Last question - what question would you like Antiracist Parenting Podcast to answer in a future episode?

Daniel: I would love to learn more about how white parents are teaching the concept of allyship or privilege perhaps - I won't use the word allyship because it's becoming a cliché now that lacks meaning. I would love to hear white parents talking about 1) how are they helping their children to understand the concept of privilege at a young age. And by that I mean understanding that they have advantages that are afforded to them that are not necessarily earned. It doesn't mean that they didn't earn the things that they have, they just have things that they didn't earn as well. How are they teaching their children that? And how are they teaching them to extend that privilege to people who will benefit from it? Or who are marginalized, I should say, so not encouraging them to go out and be saviors. But I am encouraging them to be thoughtful about how do we extend our privilege to people who have been historically, systemically marginalized and oppressed for ways that we will never ever be able to identify with.

Hannah: Any final thoughts, comments, anything we didn't ask that you wanted to answer?

Daniel: I don't think so. I would encourage everybody listening to think about tangible things with your children, there are so many great little books. Ada Twist Scientist, it's one of my favorites showing Black people. So Black people can't be the only ones loving themselves. We have to teach everybody to love Black people too. And brown people and all people. I'm always in favor of fathers - make sure that your sons have female heroes. Make sure that white kids have black heroes and that they recognize that as a matter of goodness, source of goodness. And anybody who is hearing my voice right now, I love you. I know that we don't know each other. But if you are tuning into this, it's because you have some vested interest in trying to make this world be what it ought to be. And I'm grateful for you. You are not alone. And I love you and and let's get this work together.

SooJin: Thank you so much for your time, your wisdom, your vulnerability, your honesty, your unapologetic-ness and, and everything that you shared with us. What a gift.

Daniel: That's kind. Thank you. Thank you for the work that you're doing. Thank you for this space. And please don't hesitate to reach out if there's ever anything that I can do to be helpful in this effort.

SooJin and Hannah: We won't!

SooJin: Okay, thanks so much. Have a good rest of your day.

Daniel: Thank you. You too.

Hannah: Thank you.

SooJin and Hannah: Wow. Amazing.

SooJin: So what are some takeaways like from our conversation with Daniel? And what would you like to commit to in terms of whatever learning you took away?

Hannah: Yeah. So one thing Daniel had brought up was about how his own bias like how he's communicating, or making sure to not sort of pass down biases to the kids. And so that's something I'm going to start paying attention to more closely of just like, what, what biases are coming out and like, how am I communicating about that? So that's one thing I want to commit to. And also when we had asked about, you know, what he wants to learn about with like, what our white parents teaching about privilege and unearned advantage, that's something I really want to not only reflect on how I do that, but also figuring out a way to get more white parents in that conversation and have that conversation. So those are the two things I kind of, I guess are most honed in on.

SooJin: I think for me, it's a reminder like, my biggest takeaway is the reminder from him when he was saying like, Black people can't be the only people who love themselves. Like we need other people. We need other folks to see Black people as beautiful as valuable like in the same way that he sees his children in the same way that I see my daughter like we need everyone to be seeing our kids as that. So yeah, that was just kind of like a reminder for me and, and with my daughter - what he was saying that he's like really trying to hone in self-love among his children - what I realized when he was talking about that was, I've kind of not stopped doing it, but I've pulled away from that kind of targeted teaching with my daughter. That was top of mind when she was younger. But as she's getting older, and we're talking about other things, you know, like now that she's 12 and like, she's going to be a teenager like we're talking about, like dating, we're talking about like, relationships, friendships, and you know, so we're talking about a lot of other things and in so doing, I realized that I haven't been teaching self-love. It isn't top of mind for me anymore and I need to make that top of mind, like going forward because he's absolutely right. Like the moment she steps outside the door, our society is chomping at the bit waiting to like, bring her down, you know, in the way that they look at her and the things that they say. And so I just yeah, so that was like a really great reminder from from Daniel that I need to step that up again. And, and not retreat from that kind of like teaching. And, and bring that back to the fore. So yeah, so really thankful for him for helping me realize that "Oh, I've kind of been slacking in that area and I need to bring that to the fore again." Because like, teen like that's when like insecurities are starting to come to its height. Right. And this is a time where like, you know, even like your friends are starting to tear you down. So not just strangers. So yeah, I need to make that top of mind with my daughter going forward.

Outro (music by Mike Myth Productions):

SooJin: So we just want to say thank you for joining us today. You can find more information about us and past episodes on our website antiracistparentingpodcast.com A big shout out to Mike Myth Productions for the intro and outro music.

Hannah: This work requires us to challenge ourselves and take care of ourselves. Be well.

SooJin: Be antiracist.