

## **E2: Talking to Middle School-Aged Kids About the Uprising Following George Floyd's Murder - Part 2 of 3**

Co-hosts: SooJin Pate and Hannah Carney

Guest: Karla Benson Rutten

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 part 2 of our 3-part series on how to talk to your children about the uprising and racial reckoning that's been taking place. That was triggered by George Floyd's murder. In part one we spoke to Daniel Shannon of Daniel Shannon Speaks about the conversations he's been having with his young children. He shared stories about the counter-conditioning he's been doing with children to provide them with a foundation of self love and acceptance that is so strong that it will withstand the negative messages they receive about themselves from the outside world. Essentially, if we think about it, he's creating a fortress of protection around his children to mitigate internalized racism from taking place *through* his parenting. From that conversation with Daniel, both Hannah and I made commitments to apply what we learned from him into our own parenting. So it's time for "Accountability Check-In" - Hannah, can you remind our listeners what your commitments were and update us on how that's going?

Hannah: Thanks SooJin.

I'd like to start by offering a little bit of background here – my name is Hannah Carney. I use the pronouns she, her and hers. I identify as a white, cis-gender woman, married to a white man named John and together we are raising two white boys. Tony is 6 and Matteo is 5 years old.

I made two commitments from last episode 1) was to look at the ways I'm passing down my own bias to my kids and the second commitment was to think about ways I (as a white parent) talk to my kids about white privilege and unearned advantage. And we will also have a future episode dedicated to this topic as well.

In thinking about my own bias – and really focusing on implicit bias, which are attitudes and beliefs that we as humans are not necessarily aware of. For example, we may implicitly favor one group over another which leads to biased decision-making. I took

the Harvard Implicit Bias assessment related to race awhile back. I learned that I have a slight bias towards white people. This bias, if I'm not aware of it, could lead to making biased decisions. And I think about this in particular related to schools. So if I'm looking at schools for my kids and have an implicit bias toward white people – I may feel more comfortable choosing a school that is predominantly white rather than a school that is more racially diverse. Over the years, I've learned a lot about my implicit biases and work hard to mitigate how these internalized attitudes and beliefs impact my decisions and behavior. Over time, it becomes easier to catch myself and building relationships across difference (especially race) has been extremely helpful for me on my journey.

So knowing that I have a slight bias toward white people, I seek out schools, parks, friend groups and activities that include people of all races. And, I analyze my words and interactions with my kids. For example, my two boys attended a baseball clinic last winter and I noticed that the kids and coaches were almost all white. So in the car on the way home, I said to Tony and Matteo – “you know, I noticed that the people at the clinic were almost all white. What do you think about that?” They thought about it for a minute – and then Tony said “yeah, and almost all the parents were white too.” This reminded me of the conversation we had with Daniel last week – or last time - that kids are really aware of who's in the room and who is not. So talking about it is really important.

Another recent question that Tony asked as we were driving to the park was “why do we only have two neighbors with brown skin?” This question led to a mini history lesson on how our neighborhood sits on Indigenous lands of the Dakota people, who were tricked and forced to leave. And later rules were set into place that helped white people to buy homes in our neighborhood while discriminating against people of color and most harshly against black people. And even though those rules (such as redlining and racial covenants) aren't supposed to be operating now. This history still impacts home buying

practices today and our neighborhoods are still very segregated. NPR has a podcast series called Scene on Radio: Seeing White which is super helpful. And a more recent podcast series called Nice White Parents that I highly recommend.

One last story I'll share about privilege and unearned advantage has to do with movies and shows. I talk with my kids a lot about who is on TV and who isn't. And what roles do people play and how do they treat each other. There is a scene in particular that we talked about where the main character, a white man, goes into a building for a job interview. He is met by the receptionist who is a Black woman. The white man is late for the meeting and the Black woman tells him this. He retorts that she should think more carefully about how she greets guests who enter the building – and disrespectfully says something like “you should be nicer since you're essentially the face of the company.” The Black woman rolls her eyes and tells him to take a seat. Then a white woman (the boss) comes to meet the man – and he offers a genuine apology for his lateness and is given a fresh start for the interview. A lot to unpack with all this – but the thing I honed in on with my kids was the fact that the main character was hostile toward the Black

woman and very kind and respectful toward the white woman – both of whom told him he was late. So that is my accountability check-in for this episode.

SooJin: So I am a straight, Asian-American cis-woman who is raising a mixed-Black daughter with her dad who is also my former partner. She is twelve years old and just started 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My commitment was to revisit conversations that I used to have with my daughter around the importance of self love and self acceptance. So we had about 3 different conversations around that since our last episode. And I started the conversation by asking the same series of questions I used to ask when she was younger. For example, do you love yourself? Do you think you're beautiful? Why? You know, her dad and I we were very intentional about talking to her about the importance of not just – she is physically beautiful, there's no denying that – but that her internal beauty is actually more significant and important. And that you need to be beautiful on the inside and so we've been revisiting those conversations. I've been asking those series of questions again, and it's been really great. And also timely because one of the things I pointed out to her was how at this stage in life – so she's in 7<sup>th</sup> grade now – and at this stage is when friends can start to turn on you, can be mean, and point out certain things about you right? And that can make you feel shamed or embarrassed about something. So I was asking her, have you been experiencing that? Are you noticing friends being more critical or judgmental of each other? And she said, at this point – no. But I was telling her that this is something to be on the lookout for, and if it comes to surface, please let me know so we can talk through that. And again, just reminding her how important what she thinks and feels about herself is more important and surpasses any other person's opinion of who she is. And also about the importance of being surrounded by friends who do value you, who see you, who see your brilliance and beauty, and that this time as friendships get to be more complicated, you might have to let go of certain friends and that's OK. So anyway, those were some of the conversations that we had over the past couple of weeks, and I'm thankful for Daniel for that reminder of how important it is that we do that counter-conditioning daily right? To create that fortress of protection so that they don't start internalizing the racist messages that they are receiving from the outside world.

So before we get to our very special guest today, I just wanted to provide a caveat for our audience members (our listeners).

Certain episodes might resonate with you more than others. Depending on the social identities you hold, some of the advice shared may or may not apply to you. We trust our audience members to know the difference and to be able to understand how one's positionality can change the context in which advice or suggestions are shared. By positionality, I'm referring to how our social identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.,) determine our "place" in the world, leading to differences in power, access, and opportunity. So we trust that you will know that there is no "one size fits all" approach to antiracist parenting because, depending on your positionality, the context or dynamic in which the advice is given shifts. For example, when Daniel spoke about how important it is to teach his children to love their blackness and to see dark skin as beautiful, that is not the same as white people teaching their children to love their whiteness and to see white skin as beautiful because that messaging is everywhere. Given that

we live in a white supremacist society that values white people and devalues black people, Daniel's positionality makes what he is doing with his children not only brilliant but essential to developing a positive sense of self among his black children in the midst of a society that tears black people and black culture down. Here's the bottom line: We trust you, our listeners, to understand how your positionality will determine which advice applies to you and which doesn't. We trust that you will take what resonates with you and leave the rest.

So on that note, Hannah can you set the intention for this episode today?

Hannah: SooJin and I, our intention as co-hosts for our session today is coming to this conversation with an open heart, a willingness to learn from others and to expand our lens around antiracist parenting.

SooJin: Great, thanks Hannah. I am so excited to introduce to you our very special guest, my dear friend, Karla Benson Rutten. Karla, can you please tell us a little bit about yourself, who you are, where you are coming from and what you do?

Karla: Definitely, thank you SooJin and Hannah for having me on the show. I'm super excited about it and just as an aside, everything that you were talking about I was just in my little corner doing some snaps. Again my name is Karla, and I always like to begin with my identities. I love that you were talking about social identities so that I locate myself within all of my intersecting identities. I identify as a Black woman, as a parent, a partner, I'm a sister, a daughter, I'm an entrepreneur. I grew up working class, military family, first generation college student and lots of other things that inform my world view and how I go about the world. What I do is, I like to tell people I have many years of experience working in higher education, working in non-profits, really focusing on empowering people, empowering communities, and empowering leaders to live authentically, create authentic and inclusive communities, and create spaces where folks can thrive in all of that in their authentic truth. In particular, I work with leaders in organizations really helping them transform their work and begin to take the risks that are needed to make changes in which they can create innovative systems that center diversity, equity and inclusion in ways that benefit the whole. So that's what I do, and I do that in lots of different spaces, in different communities.

SooJin: Great, thank you. So what intention do you have for today, for this episode?

Karla: Yeah. My intention first of all is to have this really important conversation with other parents. To be authentic, to be real. And also one of my really big intentions is to remain hopeful and optimistic about the future for all of our children. Even in the face of this tremendous reckoning that this country is doing around the original pandemic of racism that gets coupled with this health pandemic of COVID-19 and all of the other disparities that are even more highlighted for everyone now. So in the face of all of this racism and violence against Black and Brown people, I want to make sure I'm remaining optimistic and hopeful as I raise my children and as I talk with other parents who want to do the same, who are doing the same trying to figure that out.

SooJin: That is so powerful, thanks so much Karla for lifting that up. So what conversations have you been having with your children about this moment?

Karla: You know, my partner and I we have really honest conversations with our kids. We have for years since they were little about what's going on. About their identities. I really resonated with you and what Daniel Shannon was saying in the first episode about providing counter-conditioning or counter-narratives is how I think about it as well. Same as you SooJin, from the time the kids were babies talking, and as Daniel was sharing, about how beautiful they are, how your Blackness is awesome, developing a really strong sense of Black pride. And using age-appropriate language the older they got, but when things were happening around race and in particular the killings of Black men and women and trans folk and all of that, we talk about it. Mostly because of the work that I do, it was always something they saw or heard when I'd take them to work with me. They'd be at speakers or conversations, so it was very natural for that. And so now that we're in a time where the country is really having lots of different types of conversations around race and racism, we talk about it. Every time, whether it was Philando Castile or Jamar Clark, because again, it's happening here these things happen here where we're located in Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Twin Cities. We're really open and honest so they know about everything that's happening. So with George Floyd, how awful, or Ahmaud Arbery – we talk about it and ask them, well what do you think about this? How are you feeling? Here's how I'm feeling. They see my partner and I and our reactions and how we talk to each other and how we manage our emotions and talk with them. So we're really super honest, and now because I have a 10 and a 12 year old, I ask them does this come up at school? What are your friends saying? Are you talking about it? What's happening and what are those conversations like? So that's what we've been talking about, but also because their older now, my daughter's going into 7<sup>th</sup> grade and my son's going into 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they can actually have more complex conversations about behaviors, histories, civil rights, what that means for you. What it meant in the 50's, 60's and before and what it means now, what it looks like now. We can have deeper conversations about colonization and what does that mean. And I just love what your first speaker Daniel Shannon was saying about this counter-conditioning because the conversations that we were having around school had started in earnest for me when my daughter started middle-school because I wanted to know what are they teaching you about history? I knew we'd have to do our own teaching of other things to provide that counter-narrative. So they are used to those sorts of conversations and many of our conversations are around because my son will often ask those questions – why do we keep getting killed? Why do we keep getting shot? What is that about? So those are the kind of conversations that we're having – “when will this change” sort of things. So those are the conversations we're having.

SooJin: Do you feel like things have shifted from when Philando Castile was killed to George Floyd now given the age difference [of your kids]?

Karla: Yes. Now they want to be more engaged in having the conversation and personalizing it. And going to rallies and protests and actually enjoying hearing young people share their stories and what that means. Being invested in making their own protest signs. And really wanting ownership of that so the conversation has definitely shifted because they understand it now on

a personal level. They are understanding that our experiences as Black people, their grandmothers' experiences, their aunts and uncles' experiences are different than their friends even. How they are seen is different than their friends, they have a better awareness of that now. That's what is different. So I can ask more complex questions and have more complex conversations. While we do share that there are great commonalities and awesome things about people and the humanity of people, there's also some really messed up stuff that people do and that systems do. So our conversations now are often about the system of racism. Or the systems of sexism. Again, in ways that they can understand and we give examples and things, but that's what is different that I really like. I think they like it most of the time too.

SooJin: So how have you answered some of those questions that your kids have raised?

Karla: Honestly, my partner and I go at it together. I'm in an inter-racial relationship, so my partner is white. And so, before we even had kids we've been able to have these really important conversations and are comfortable talking with each other about these issues. That's great because the kids get the perspective from two different folks from two different racial backgrounds. We're highly progressive, highly liberal so being honest our perspectives are the same. So the way we answer those questions, and I often will be like you know there is a whole history that we have to talk about. And now because they are older we can talk about that history of colonization, so that's what I mean like we're talking about what that means. And giving examples of you know the taking of people's land and things like that. And questioning histories. It's a lot of reframing. So it kind of depends, but we're honest about it. And we often either are showing or encouraging watching documentaries or articles showing things that they can understand. Being honest about what is said.

SooJin: So it sounds like their questions are like a door to history lessons.

Karla: Yes, yes, yes. So the question of – and this was when they were more little – the question of why did the white people enslave the Black people? Why did they do that? Well let's talk about colonization, and power and how do you justify, and capitalism, you have to dehumanize people and so if you spend 400 years dehumanizing people and forcing them into enslavement and you have to justify that to other people. That's how that happens and it becomes part of the socialization of all the next generation so even when emancipation comes, you still have a group of folks who have been disenfranchised, enslaved, violence inflicted upon them for all this time, it's not just going to automatically be we're all equal now. Because that wasn't even true then. So it's a long history, then it's Reconstruction, then it's Jim Crow, then it's the Civil Rights movement, but really power structures never changed. So here we are in 2020 and we keep seeing the same things. These aren't different conversations, these aren't different structures, so that's why that keeps happening. That's what I mean by the conversations are usually longer. It can't be a short answer, now that they're older. They can understand more those systems. And that has led us to conversations of "and that's why in the school that you're in (predominantly white school) all of your teachers are white." It's not that there aren't any teachers of color who are more than qualified to be your teacher, but when you're in a system that isn't set up to find or support or seek out or have networks that are diverse. Then you're

going to get the people that you know and who you are used to finding. And that's why your teachers are white. So we always kind of locate ourselves then in the present moment, because past is really important and this is how the structure now plays out. So that's what I mean when I say, now they are old enough to understand. And to question and be like, hmm, we do need more teachers of color in our school. So that's how it plays out in our family.

SooJin: Thank you, thank you.

Hannah: So last time we talked to Daniel about how we had been working with our children or doing antiracist parenting with our children since birth, however, there may be parents who are in this moment sort of coming into this conversation for the first time. So while we initially focused on "is it ever too early" to start these conversations, I want to address parents who are wondering if it's ever too late and if we're just coming into the conversation now, how do parents get started if they are just coming to this conversation now?

Karla: Well it's never too late. And let's be honest, realistically, most parents aren't – maybe that's changed – in my experience, most parents aren't talking to their kids about race at a young age. It's more of, which is understandable, the narrative of we're all human beings, color doesn't matter, all that – that's usually the narrative (colorblind) that we raise our kids with. But as you talked about the last time, it's never too early you really should be talking about this because kids notice race. And so the reason I say it's never too late is because your middle school-aged kids and high school-aged kids they already notice the differences. They already have noticed their neighborhoods. They already noticed who's in their neighborhood or not. They already notice who their doctors and things are. You know what I mean – in terms of race? They already know and they're already having conversations about it either implicitly or explicitly. So as parents, and even for you the murder of George Floyd is something we can't look away from. That's why more parents I think who haven't talked about race with their kids before are like "what do I do now?" I want to shield my kids from this – is what I've heard some folks say. We should shield our kids from this and not let them be part of these conversations or see this or that video. And what I would say is that's not ideal because it's the blinders that keeps systems of oppression going. It's the misinformation or lack of information or the cluelessness of folks that keep systems of oppression going. So if it's a parent who who actually wants to talk to their kids about what's going on is great. That's fantastic. And so what I would recommend is to just educate yourself first and also just be honest with your kids. You can say, you know, I haven't dealt with or talked about this myself very much but I feel like we need to talk about this now as a family, and I'm no expert. I'm no expert, I'm not going to pretend to be an expert, but here's how I'm feeling. How are you feeling? That can be the beginning of the conversation with your children. What do you think about this? Just ask questions first. Together you could find some resources online or just information – my kids and I do that a lot. They'll ask a question about something, and I'll say I'm not sure let's look it up. Let's see what we can find online. Or if I have a resource of my own, I'll grab it and we'll talk about it. So that's something parents can do – just be really honest. And give concrete responses. If kids ask you questions and you're not ready for – so like if your child is like "what did George Floyd do to have that cop treat him like that?" Answer as you know. You don't necessarily have to show the

video. Answer for what you know and then look up and do some fact-checking sorts of things. Just being honest, that's what parents can do. There is a book, maybe you already talked about it, it's old by this time but it's a good one that I recommend to parents "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race." I always tell folks to just pick that up and read it. Good. That might be the first thing you want to read. From there listen to some different podcasts. I like the podcast that you recommended Hannah, Nice White Parents, I haven't listened to that one yet. But I was like that's probably a good one. So again that education piece for parents is important, you need to hear other people's perspectives who are racially different from you. And really get to a point where you can hold commonalities and differences at the same time. And be OK with that. So that's part of that educative piece that I would say parents need to do.

Hannah: Yeah and you're making me think of this idea of revisiting. So, for example, I might say something to my kids or when we're talking as a family and then I'll go and do some research and follow up on that and then you can always go back and say "you know, I was thinking about that and I actually have a different view on that now and here's what I learned." Kids are totally open to that. And modeling that I said something before, and I now have a different view of that.

Karla: Absolutely. Watching documentaries with your kids. Pausing at different spots as you're watching or movies. Let's pause, what did we just see here. We just did that. We watched Hidden Figures a couple of months ago. That's one of my kids' favorite movies, and when it came out they were a little younger. We just watched it again, so I pause it and ask "what do you think happened here?" Why do you think he said that? I think it was the scene where early, right in the first scene they were driving to work – the three Black women – and they got stopped by a cop who was making assumptions about "do they really work at NASA?" or something like that. So we paused it, and I was like "what's going on?" So I love doing that. I don't know if my kids necessarily like that because they just want to watch the movie, but those are the kinds of things you can do as a parent to engage young people in the now as well as the history. Because both are really important. And what I've found is that locating them into the present is important.

Hannah: There's a teacher Naomi O'Brien, who has like a YouTube Channel, but she does videos and it's all about how to teach kids about racism. The videos I've seen really focus on Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade kind of age, which is really relevant to me. In one of the videos she recommends this lesson plan around this book called Chocolate Me. And the book has a narrative of some white kids are making fun of their Black neighbor about his skin color and different physical features. And the boy is feeling sad that he's getting made fun of. And he works it out with his mom and comes out and is like being Black is awesome. But what we talked about at the end is that the white kids never really learned about the impacts that their words were having on the boy. So one of the things Naomi O'Brien had brought up as an idea, was like "what else could we add to this story?"

Karla: Exactly. Asking the question “what’s missing?” I am all about the processing of books, documentaries or what have you after we read them. My partner, my kids and I – we read all the time. We read before bed time, we read during the day and after we finish that particular part, we ask “what did you think of that?” “What do you wish this person had said?” Those kind of conversations even when they’re older. My son and I are reading a series around mythology, so we’re reading a series that locates young, middle school girls of color – Aru Shah – not sure if you’ve heard of that series. But it’s really interesting, because he has a good analysis of what’s happening in terms of racial dynamics. He might now use those words, but the questions and things that he asks are awesome so we talk about that. There’s another book that maybe you’ve heard of Something Happened in our Town. If you haven’t heard of that book, I highly recommend it. It was written by, and I don’t have the names of the authors right now, but it’s called Something Happened in our town and it just came out last year or this year. It is about two families – a Black family and a white family – and there’s been a police shooting in their town. And it takes the perspective of the white family is talking about it and then the Black family is talking about it and then the kids come together at school the next day and there’s a new kid at school. It’s really well done. It was written by a Black woman and a white woman and they are social workers or educators or something. They have guides for sharing this with young kids. The age that it is written for is Kindergarten – fourth grade. But my kids read it and thought it was really good conversation. So even those books, you can still read with your kids when they are older because the book is very nuanced and at the same time a Kindergartener can understand it, a fourth grader and beyond. Even those sorts of books are doing what you’re saying Hannah wasn’t in that other book, which I’ve read Chocolate Me – we have all the books that center little Black children – and so this does a good job of helping kids think about what impacts their words have on other people and how might the other person have felt. So I love that book, Something Happened in our Town.

Hannah: Is there anything we didn’t ask that you’d like to talk about?

Karla: I was thinking about the parent who haven’t talked about race with their kids, but want to now. The other thing that I would just add is, and I think you talked about this earlier Hannah, but it sort of like modeling behaviors for your kids. So if what’s coming out of your mouth is racism is wrong – we need to love everyone and have lots of friends from different backgrounds, but your social network is homogenous, your neighborhood is also homogenous, and your family structure and extended family is all homogenous, your kids are looking at you like “what are you talking about?” They’re probably not saying that to your face, but they hear what you’re saying and then they see what you’re doing. So you can think about, what movies are you going to see (well maybe you’re not going to see any movies right now, but what movies are you watching on Netflix), what books are you going to read, who are the characters, what are you talking about, what news outlets are your consuming as a parent? You want to start diversifying that modeling that. In particular, there needs to be an intentionality on the parents part modeling to their kids what it means to be inclusive. So if you’re not doing that, or if you have very homogenous networks right now, you’re going to want to look at those. And be honest with your kids about why your life is structured in a certain way. As you talk to them about the importance of inclusivity and things like that. So I think that’s important, I just

wanted to share just how important that is. For me, I grew up in the south in South Carolina that's where I was born, that's where my family's from, in a military family we lived in a lot of different places. I spent elementary, middle and high school in North Dakota of all places. First on an air force base that was really diverse. And then in the town after my dad retired, into an all white town, and what my parents did an excellent job of was – even when we're in this all white town – was instilling in us our Black identities and how important that is. And how we're awesome and we aren't the problem, racism is. So I got to grow up in this environment, even in the midst of a very white town, I still grew up always knowing my own racial identity and being proud of that. They kept us highly connected with our family, all of the books in our home really centered Blackness. We got Jet Magazine when that was still in print. So we were always up on the Black news. I think about that in everything we saw – Essence Magazine, Ebony Magazine – in the home, so in the home where we spent a good part of our lives as well outside of school, we were surrounded by our identities. My parents' friend networks were diverse and they kept those networks and friendships from their homes in South Carolina. So that was really important for me, and that's why I grew up being really strong in my identity. But you have to be intentional, they were doing that intentionally. So myself as well, and my partner, we're really intentional about our friend networks. So our kids go to a predominantly white school, however, they have friends – you know I have a very diverse friend network and many of us have children around the same age – so when my kids have birthday parties there are kids coming from all over, not just school. They see their parents in all different kinds of relationships across race, across gender identity, religion, all of those things. We model that for them. So for them, they also are around social networks and all different kinds of books. So that's what I mean by modeling, but you have to do that intentionally. And you have to have the conversations too. We can't assume that because we live in an ethnically diverse neighborhood that my kids "get it" they understand power and privilege and marginalization and all of that. No, not necessarily – not if you're not talking about it. You have to point things out and talk about things in a different way, because we know they are not getting this kind of education in school. Some schools might be doing it, and high five for those schools. But most schools aren't. So there has to be intentionality – just being in a diverse environment doesn't mean that folks are developing any sense of cultural competency. And that's really what we're talking about for parents – you need to develop some level of cultural competency if these issues are important to you and you want to be antiracist, which I assume you do if you're listening to this podcast, you have got to do some self-awareness and examination of your own level of cultural competency so that you can be more intentional. That's the only thing I wanted to add.

Hannah: Thank you – so we're going to transition into our closing. We have our lightning round of questions, but before we do that – is there anything you'd like to promote, let listeners know about that you're involved with, where we can find you, all of those things.

Karla: Sure, awesome, yeah. So I am the founder and owner of my business is Benson Rutten Innovations. And so again, I do coaching, consulting, training, workshops around diversity, equity and inclusion. If you are wanting to think about what a workshop would look like for your organization or for your classroom or if you just need some coaching or consulting around

those things you can find me on my website or on FaceBook. My website is [bensonruttennovations.com](http://bensonruttennovations.com) and I also work at Girl Scouts of America River Valley and lead a team that really is working to bring more girls of color into girl scouting so encourage you to check us out there [girlscoutsrv.org/communityengagement](http://girlscoutsrv.org/communityengagement) and you can find out more about what we do there.

Hannah: Great, thanks. SooJin, anything you want to add in before we do our lightning round?

SooJin: No, I'm taking so many notes. So much wisdom pouring forth.

Hannah: Ok, here we go. Antiracist parenting is...

Karla: Essential.

Hannah: What's the last thing your children did to make you smile?

Karla: Cartwheels. My daughter and I do cartwheels. We started this thing back in March, like let's do cartwheels every day. So we literally have still been doing cartwheels. And every time she bounds out there all happy doing her quick cartwheel. And I'm grounding myself, like OK 46-year-old hips, there we go. But it always makes me smile. We always do that every day.

Hannah: That's awesome. What are you reading right now?

Karla: These are great questions. I am currently reading a book called *The Vanishing Half*. The author's first name is Cam, and the last name is escaping me. But it's called *The Vanishing Half* it's about twins in the south in Louisiana who could "pass" essentially. Two Black women in a black town, and it's a very interesting story so far about colorism, Black identity, and what that looks like when you leave home. Again I'm just starting it. It's really good though.

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

Karla: What a great question! I meditate every morning and every night. I wake up and do like a minute and a half of intentional breathing meditations. I do that and I make sure to do at least 10 minutes of some sort of intentional physical activity, every day, right when I wake up to make sure I get it in.

Hannah: What is one thing you're committed to doing in your antiracist parenting journey?

Karla: I am committed to being honest with my kids and loving on them and making sure they have that self-love that we talked about before. I'm so committed to making sure they love who they are – all of their Blackness – embrace it like a cloak. And I'm committed to having them, like what I said my intention is of having optimism and hope. I'm really committed to them finding and living in radical joy all the time. That's what I love about my kids – they love life. I want them to always love life so I'm committed to being on this journey with them as a parent

as they navigate all of their different identities in particular their racial identity. Just committed to raising them with my partner in a joyful, authentic way.

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

Karla: I'm so excited about this series already! This is the second one I think. You know what I think is an important question to answer is multiracial families, interracial relationships, and raising of children. What do folks need to be thinking about in multiracial families. And in particular, in a family where one parent or primary caregiver is white and the other is a person of color.

Hannah: Thank you.

Karla: Thank you – thanks for creating this space to have this conversation. This is fantastic.

SooJin: And thank you so much for sharing all of your wisdom and insights and so many great ideas. I have so many notes here that I can't wait to implement. So thank you for that.

Karla: Thank you.

SooJin: Wow, another amazing guest! We are so lucky to have her as part of our community. Now that we've said goodbye to Karla, let's talk about some of the key takeaways or insights we'd like to incorporate into our own parenting practice.

Hannah: Well, I definitely want to read *Something Happened in our Town*. What I was really focused on was this educate yourself, and be honest with your kids, and asking questions about "how are you feeling?" or "what do you think about this?" and then letting the conversation flow from there. That's just a really good reminder in terms of letting kids also be leaders in the conversation with those open-ended questions. And whatever bubbles up for them, to kind of go with that. And to know that we can always revisit, if needed, depending on what they might ask.

SooJin: I thought the education piece too, she really drove that home about how essential and important it is given that that is the project of antiracist parenting. That is one of the key components is the alternative education and viewpoints and perspectives that we constantly need to bring in to offset and to balance out the other narratives that kids are getting in schools and media. So I really loved that she kept honing on that, and also about how so important it is as parents we need to model to our children what it is that we want to see in them. When she talked about – if you are saying that it's important to us as a family that we are inclusive, that we are for racial equity, well then your actions – your life – needs to actually reflect that. It's not enough to say this is what we want. So really appreciated that. I think for me the biggest takeaway that I want to create a commitment around is when she was talking about how her kids love life – she said they love life and I want them to always love life – and the importance

of radical Black joy. My goodness, honestly, I don't know about you Hannah, given everything that's been happening – so of course the pandemic about racism, the pandemic of COVID, and then most recently what happened to Jacob Blake and Chadwick Boseman, our Black Panther who died. It's really difficult – I haven't even thought about joy. I haven't even thought about being intentional about bringing that into my life, because all of the devastation and trauma that our world, our nation is facing. I loved how Karla brought in her intention about how important it is to have optimism and hope. As I've been thinking about this summer, and the conversations I've been having with my daughter, not once have we talked about what makes us happy. What brings joy into our life, we have not had a conversation about that at all. So that is what I'm committing to – to bring in radical Black joy into our family. To bring in radical joy, and I can't wait. That's the first thing I'm going to do after this call is ask my daughter, what brings you joy? How can we incorporate more of that into our lives since these pandemics are not going away any time soon. So that's what I'm committing to and I'm excited to have that conversation with her.

Hannah: So I'm thinking through my commitment, in addition to buying Something Happened in our Town from a Black-owned book store – I will commit to that. I want to do more thinking around the conversation with multiracial and interracial parenting and relationships and thinking through what that conversation might look like on a future episode and connecting with my friends who are in interracial relationships and raising kids and learning more.

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](http://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.