

Exploring and Supporting Racial Justice through Play

Children, especially young children, use their play to reflect on and process their experiences and the events they witness in real life. This can sometimes lead to them asking some uncomfortable questions that we, as adults, still struggle with ourselves. However, it is never too early to support your children in exploring themes such as social and racial identity through their play. When we effectively and appropriately support these early play experiences, we are providing the foundation for their future understanding of racism and other forms of prejudice, and their sense of agency in advocating for themselves and others.

Besides engaging in analytical discussion through play, it is important to be analytical about the types of materials, media, and games with which your child is engaging. Below are some resources to support you in making decisions about the types of toys, games, and media to which you expose your child, as well as some guiding principles to keep in mind when supporting your children's play.

The Benefits of an Inclusive Range of Diversity Toys, United Toy Company

Written by a toy manufacturer out of Australia, a country whose research into Early Childhood Education is at the forefront of our profession, this is a brief and easy-to-read overview of the developmental benefits of diversely representative toys. Through this link you can also access their store, which contains a variety of high-quality, age-appropriate, racially, physically, and socially diverse toys.

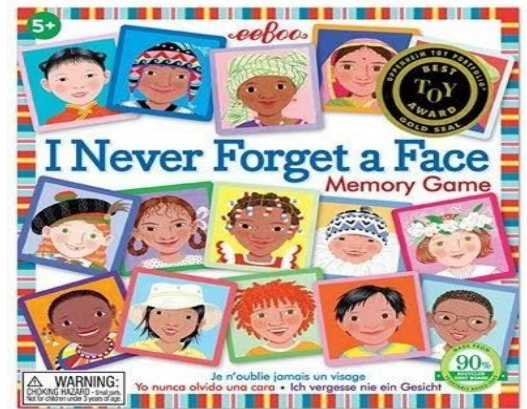


How Important are Ethnic Dolls?, Parents Latina Magazine

This article written by a Latinx mother, Damaris Ocaña Perez, dives into the influence racially and ethnically diverse toys have on young children developing self-image, and how this relates to learned prejudices, such as racism. There are some useful direct quotes from children and parents about discussing learned racism in play, as well as a few suggestions and links for activities at home.

[Our Favorite Diverse Toys for Kids,](#) **The Every Mom**

Written by an activist mother of color, Ojus Patel, this list contains many links to appropriately diverse toys, games, and activities for young children. These include dolls, board/card games, instruments, books, blocks, art supplies, and pretend play props. The range of diversity and representation in this list includes not only racial, but cultural, and physical as well.



[Why are all the White Dolls Sitting Together on the Target Shelf?,](#)

Raising Race Conscious Children

In this deeply reflective blog post, a biracial mother of two Black daughters, Melissa Giraud, describes how she supported her two daughters in remaining reflective and pushing back against the racial injustice reflected in their dolls. There are many examples of strategies recommended by the Race Conscious organization, as well as information about how she and her family make purchasing choices for their children.

Please note: you must keep clicking "Next→" in order to read the whole piece.

Guiding Principles and Strategies:

- **Challenge stereotypes and speak to representations that make you uncomfortable**
Talk about what you see with your children. Affirm their questions and comments, and model critical thinking through play and conversation. Maintain awareness of the implications of common games such as "cops and robbers" or "cowboys and indians".
- **Model empathy**
Discuss fairness and unfairness in children's play scenarios. Model empathy and understanding through dramatic play.
- **Seek out information about the manufacturers and producers**
Show your children how they can create change through awareness and conscious purchasing choices.

Most importantly: Explore through play!

Play is a safe space in which your children can experiment with the adult roles and concepts that they may be witnessing. Don't shy away from these play scenarios or discussions, as they are imperative for your child's future understanding of their own and others' identities.