

GUEST ESSAY

How to Raise Kids Who Won't Be Racist

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If race is largely a social construct, then teaching children about it will only perpetuate racism — right? Wrong: Studies show precisely the opposite. Open conversations about race and racism can make white children less prejudiced and can increase the self-esteem of children of color.

If states ban the teaching of critical race theory, as conservative lawmakers in many are attempting to do, or if schools don't provide consistent education about racism and discrimination, it's imperative that parents pick up the slack.

Even if we don't want them to, children do notice differences in race and skin color. And that means that attempts to suppress discussions about race and racism are misguided. Those efforts won't eliminate prejudice. They may, in fact, make it worse.

So-called colorblind parenting — avoiding the topic of race in an effort to raise children who aren't prejudiced — is not just unhelpful, it actually perpetuates racism. That's because racism isn't driven solely by individual prejudice. It's a system of inequity bolstered by racist laws and policies — the very fact that opponents of teaching critical race theory are trying to erase.

Some people, especially white people like me, may shy away from talking to their children about race, either because they've been indoctrinated to

Children learn from what they see. They notice that in American culture, race and power intersect in a clear way. Children may observe, for instance, that all but one president has been white, that many of the wealthiest people are white and that more working-class people are people of color.

When children aren't presented with the context required to understand why our social are wh

These conversations can feel awkward, but remember that whatever your children don't learn about race from you, they'll learn from the media, their friends or their own imaginations.

Racism won't end until parents — and children — see prejudice, recognize its perniciousness | le