



Diversity Gazette

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Square Pegs in Round Holes

by Heather Duhart

I am the mom of two amazing children who also happen to be biracial. A few weeks ago, when I was picking them up from school, I was greeted by some energetic happy kiddos, two of whom, when they saw me, had a quizzical look in their eyes. I have seen this look before and I will see it again. The look said, "I see that this woman is picking up my friend, but she doesn't look like the person I think should be picking up my friend." And then the inevitable question came: "Are you Kaiya's mommy?" The child's head was cocked to one side in a pondering, innocent, typical way of many children. You see, this child was expecting one thing and was having trouble reconciling what he saw in front of him. In other words, he was expecting, say, a square to come pickup his friend, and what he got was a circle, and he was having trouble wrapping his head around it. Amused, saddened, and intrigued, a bevy of emotions and thoughts ran through my head.

True confession: I have thought about writing this article a lot more than I intended to and sat down to write it more times than I can count. Any chance to engage others in thought and conversation around diversity and inclusion seems like an

important opportunity, and I procrastinated because I was scared of screwing it up. I was fearful that my message would miss the mark. There are also so many topics I could have chosen to address that I felt overwhelmed. I considered trying to unpack how implicit bias may be involved in African American boys being 19% of preschool enrollment in North Carolina but 45% of school suspensions, or explaining how our privileges play into how we exist and interact with the world. There is a lot of work to be done to improve our understanding about diversity and inclusion, and having related conversations is not easy. It is messy. It is hard. And this is exactly why we need to make it a priority.

While I've learned that parenting involves a ton of teaching, development, and *patience*, I have come to realize that my children—like all children—have a huge capacity to teach us adults as well—like this child taught me. Like a lot of folks, this diversity and inclusion matter is personal for me. And while I've come to anticipate this quizzical look from children, I still make it a point to process and unpack all questions about race and things like the disparate educational outcomes among children of difference races.

There are pivotal reminders all around me of the importance of continuing to invest in understanding diversity and inclusion issues.

My challenge to you is to consider these questions and do some self-reflection: What have you done to make yourself aware and inclusive of both the squares and the circles in our community?

If you are looking for some practical ways to talk with others about race and identity, I recommend a book by Ijeoma Oluo titled, *So You Want to Talk about Race*. You can find it using the QR code below, as well as a couple of other articles.



Cause for Alarm:
Addressing North
Carolina Early
Childhood Suspension
and Expulsion Rates:



"Privileged" article
by Kyle Korver:



*So You Want to Talk
about Race* book: