Early Risers Discussion Guide

Season 3, Episode 1: *The Power of Place: Visiting George Floyd Square with Young Children* released June 1, 2022

**Learning Goal:** In May 2022, the world recognized the second anniversary of George Floyd’s murder. In this episode we take listeners to George Floyd Square, a community memorial space which also tells a much bigger story about racism, policing, and the struggle for racial justice in this country and around the world. The learning objective is to learn and discuss how we can show young children how to mourn and to heal from racial injustice in this sacred space.

**Suggested Conversation Length:** 60 minutes

*Early Risers* is a podcast focused on how to talk with young children about race. Hosted by *Dianne Haulcy*, the podcast invites early childhood experts into conversations about how parents, caregivers and early childhood educators can tackle this big topic with the little ones in their lives.
Background

George Floyd Square (GFS) in Minneapolis has become a creative memorial and gathering space for healing. The site is lovingly maintained by volunteers. There are colorful murals, art, flowers, and even stuffed animals that visitors have left as offerings. Early Risers host Dianne Haulcy visited the site with early childhood educator Sheila Williams Ridge shortly before the two-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd to talk about how we can show young children how to mourn and to heal from racial injustice in this sacred space.

Guest Bio

Sheila Williams Ridge is co-director of the Child Development Laboratory School at the University of Minnesota. She’s also co-author of “Nature-Based Learning for Young Children: Anytime, Anywhere, on Any Budget.” She was a featured guest on the Early Risers episode *What’s Happening in the Classroom? Early Childhood Educators and Implicit Bias* released December 1, 2021.

General Facilitator Tips

- Read through all the questions first.
- Reiterate that the purpose of the discussion is to learn from each other.
- Create an agreement with everyone in the discussion group that helps create a safe, nonjudgmental atmosphere—talking about race can be difficult.
- Be sensitive as to how people identify.
- Be prepared for a response to any remarks that might be offensive. The person saying it may not be aware that it is offensive, so be gentle in pointing it out.

Group Agreements

Ground rules and group agreements are a way to respect safety. Ask members to brainstorm and collectively determine group agreements. Here are some agreements tools to use as a reference:

- [Group agreement information from Seeds for Change](#)
- [Community Agreements tool from Just Lead Washington](#)
- [Sample group agreement from GSAFE](#)
Questions for Discussion

- Dianne and Sheila started their visit at the Say Their Names memorial cemetery. Talk through some of the things that you would say about what happened to the Black people memorialized there. How would you talk to young children about why we mourn people we have never met?

- Sheila Williams Ridge encourages parents and caregivers to come to GFS first without young children. Why do you think she said that? What would you do in that space to help you prepare to bring a young child there? Who else might you talk to, or what might you look up, to also help you prepare to bring a young child there?

- In talking to young children about what happened to George Floyd, Dianne asks Sheila about how that conversation might be different when talking to a BIPOC child or a white child. Can you discuss what you might say to your children? If you already talked to your children about this, what would you change after listening to this conversation?

- There is a lot of fear in parents and caregivers in talking about events like the murders of black and brown bodies by law enforcement because it might instill fear in children. What would you do or say to try to mitigate that fear? How do you talk about these events while communicating to children that they are safe?

- The space at GFS is a creative space where people bring things to honor the memory of George Floyd and other Black people who have died at the hands of law enforcement. If you were bringing a young child to GFS, what would you encourage them to bring?

- Dianne and Sheila ended their visit at the You Can Change the World mural. How would you encourage children to change the world after visiting GFS? What would you say to young children to instill hope in them after visiting GFS?

- How can you tap into the talents and creativity of young children to help them make sense of what they are hearing and seeing at GFS? What are some activities you could encourage them to do that are healing? How could you use music, books, stories, art and nature to help children heal?

- What are some other memorials around the country you might want to bring your children to, so you could talk about the history of racism in America and how we can heal from it?
Closing the Discussion

As you are closing your discussion, encourage people to learn about other sacred spaces and memorials that they might want to take young children. If people have not been to GFS, encourage them to make a plan for how and when they might want to visit. Acknowledge key points and lessons learned during the discussion. Finally, share additional resources participants can use to continue learning.

Additional Resources

- George Floyd Global Memorial: https://www.georgefloydglobalsmemorial.org/
- George Floyd and Anti-Racist Street Art Archive: https://georgefloydstreetart.omeka.net/
- From MPR News with Angela Davis, “Coping with prolonged grief over George Floyd, mass shootings and the pandemic”:
- From NPR, “Many know how George Floyd died. A new biography reveals how he lived”:

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