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Argumentative Essay

**Introduction**

Racial discrimination is a prejudice against a person or group of people that are from a different race; an opinion that is formed without having any knowledge of that person or group. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made racial segregation illegal, it prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or religion. Racism has come a long way, yet, racism in the United States still exists in today’s society. The United States is a country that is full of people that are different skin color and that come from different cultures. Racism it is a topic that many parents avoid talking about with their young children. Because of this lack of communication, children develop their own ideas about race and why it is not talked about. Talking to young children about race will help them have a bigger knowledge about the different races that exists in the world and not to be prejudice, it will allow them to recognize racist acts being done to them or by them, and it would teach and prepare them how to deal with the differences instead of pretending that there are none.

**Body**

The problem with racism is that parents do not talk about it. Parents do not make their children aware that this is an issue that still exists. Parents have a tendency to not talk about contain issues until they have to. This way of thinking with respect to race is often seen as or talked about as being “colorblind”. Not talking about race does not mean that children don’t see it. Many parents do not talk about race to preschoolers because they may think that they are too young. Some parents may not do it because mentioning it may put ideas in their heads. This way of thinking happens more with white parents. According to KJ Dell’Antonia, the Editor and Lead Blogger for The New York Times’ Motherlode, in her article “The Danger of Not Talking to Your Children About Race” in April 4, 2012 wrote that “A 2007 study in the Journal of Marriage and Family found that nonwhite parents are about three times more likely to discuss race than white parents.” Dell’Antonia also states the often a parent’s hope is that not talking about it will show children that race does not matter. “But research suggests the opposite: that when we don’t talk about race, our children continue to think about it – and what they think is that it matters too much to talk about.” Dell’Antonia. Many times a racist remark by a young child will simply be responded to with a “ssh” by the embarrassed parent. Children will learn about race not only from their own family members, but will gain knowledge from the world around them. Not all that children learn or believe about race will be related to their parents, especially when not talked about at home. Also according to Debra Van Ausdale & Joe R. Feagin, authors of the book “The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism.” and Erin N. Winkler, writer of the article “Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race” both said that children recognize race from a very young age and also develop a racial bias by the ages of three to five that do not necessarily go with the racial attitudes of the adults that are in their lives. Winkler also stated that a research from Katz and Kofkin in 1997 “found that infants are able to nonverbally categorize people by race and gender at six months of age. The infants looked significantly longer at an unfamiliar face of a different race than they did at an unfamiliar face of their same race.

Parents of all races need to find different ways to talk to their children at a young age about race and the differences that exist. According to Dell’Antonia “It’s children whose parents do directly address race – and directly means far more than vaguely declaring everyone to be equal – who are less likely to make assumptions about people based on the color of our skin.” Talking to children about race will allow them to be more complex in their thinking and categorizing of different people. That is like Winkler said “When children are taught to pay attention to multiple attributes of a person at once (e.g., not just race), reduces levels of bias are shown.” Taking the time to talk to children will show them that being different is good and that that is what makes them special. Children will then learn to approach differences as something that is normal and not as something that is bad. When a parent addresses the issue with a simple “we are all the same”, a child will be more confused, because in their eyes they see some differences, but are lead to wonder why their parents do not see it and why they do not want to talk about it. Tim Wise, an American anti-racism activist and writer stated in his web article “New Study: ’Colorblindness’ Reduces Kids’ Ability to See, Challenge Racism” posted September 26, 2010 that “Taking a colorblind approach with young children – such as instructing them to ‘focus on what makes us similar’ rather than dealing constructively with difference and challenging bias directly – actually reduces the likelihood that those young people will recognize discriminatory behavior when it occurs, or seek to do something about it.” Wise also referred to another study that showed “that students who had read the value-diversity version of the storybook were more likely to detect evidence of racial discrimination: 43 percent of students perceived discrimination in the ambiguous story and 77 percent perceived discrimination in the explicitly bias story.” This helps support the argument that young children will not only be able to recognize a racial bias, but also be more willing to step forward and do something about the situation.

The other problem that comes from not talking to children is that they are not able to recognize when a racist act is being done to them or even by them. Winkler uses the following example, “A White mother and preschool child are shopping at the grocery store. They pass a Black woman and child, and the White child says loudly, ’Mommy, look at that girl! Why is she so dirty?’ (Confusing dark skin with dirt is a common misconception among White preschool children.) The White mother, embarrassed by her child’s comment, responds quickly with a ‘Ssh!’” This shows that children may develop racist remarks, without knowing that they are just that. When a parent just simple “sshes” the child, they may start thinking that it is because being different is bad. Also when parents ignores or just smiles this kind of remarks, children will then come to the conclusion that it is normal and that it is ok to say those kind of things.

Also if children are not aware about the different races that exists, they tend to stare at someone that does not look like them. Many times parents just simple tell the child that staring is bad, but do not ask the child about their curiosity. Children notice when someone is not like them and try to figure out why that is, if the parents will not take that time to talk and explain that people are different in many ways, children will just take the little information of “staring is bad” and come to the conclusion that that person is bad. Which will then be taken as anyone who looks like that person is bad. Even in our daily lives when one is asked to say what they think is associated with white, people may answer with pure, clean, good. But on the other hand when asked what is associated with black, people may say: dirty, wicked, evil or bad.

Another way that a racist bias may be developed is by a parent’s social life. Children will most likely notice that the people in their family may have different heights or hair styles but are most likely the same color of skin. Children will also take notice of their neighborhood, the store, doctor’s office or anywhere they go. Therefore children will start to make social categories based on what they see and may notice that although height or hair style may not be related, that maybe occupation is. Children may also get this bias, consciously or unconsciously through books that they read, movies or television shows that they watch or even songs that they listen to. According to Winkler “Consciously or unconsciously, middle-class white culture is presented as a norm or a standard in the United States in terms of appearance, beauty, language, cultural practice, food, and so on.”

One of the ways to dealing with this problem is to talk to children at an early age. This is easier said than done. But, the first thing that needs to happen is that parents need to lose the fear of saying the wrong things. Ausdale and Feagin offer this solution “Educate yourself about the realities of racial discrimination against various groups and about the many aspects of individual and institutional racism.” There are many books that offer information about that different races. Learn not only that there are many races, but also try to learn more about their culture. But parents need to be careful not to go from racism to tokenism, don’t just do the bare minimum when associating with other races. Parents also need to make friends that are from various races and incorporate these friends into their families, this means make them part of the family and not just have them there. This will teach children that people that are not like them are also good.

Another way a parent can help their child is by learning to recognize racial prejudice and discrimination. “. . . racism is not limited to the activities of a few bigoted and demented extremist that play war games in the woods, nor are racist only hood-wearing, cross-burning fanatics that burn down churches under cover of darkness.” (Ausdale and Feagin) Believing that these kind of people are the only racist left is wrong. Extreme racism is not the only racism that still exists. Many racial remarks and treatment go unnoticed or just being passed off as “they don’t know any better” these are known as racial microaggressions. According to Derald Wing Sue, et al, co-authors of “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice” they describe “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.” One of the examples that Sue uses are “When Blacks are told that ‘I don’t see color’ or ‘We are all human beings,’ the effect is to negate their experiences as racial/cultural beings” or when an Asian or Latino American are complimented for how good they speak English, suggesting that they are not American, that they are foreigners. These are the moments that need to be recognized and talked about with a young child, parents need to talk openly with the child and ask what they say and ask if they feel that what happened is just.

**Conclusion**

Racial prejudice against a person or group of people that are from a different race is an opinion that is formed without having any knowledge of that person or group. Discrimination based on color, sex, race or national origin, as far as in public places and in the workforce was ended since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The United States is a country that is full of many races, people that are different skin color and that come from different cultures. Even when racism till exists, it is a topic that many parents avoid talking about with their young children. Children then develop their own ideas about race and why it is not talked about. Parents need to gain more knowledge about the reality of racism and talk to their young children about race so that they will have a bigger knowledge about the different races that exists in the world and not develop a prejudice. Parents need to be able to teach their children to recognize racist acts being done to them or by them. Talking with children at a young age would teach and prepare them to deal with the differences instead of pretending that there are none. Everyone want to be able to live in a better world. Teaching children about how little, and how much race and skin color means will help them to grow and become better. Teaching them at a very early age about race will teach them to be more patient and maybe not necessarily more acceptable, but to be tolerant with other races. The races of the world are like the flowers in the world, thou a rose is the same as a tulip they are both beautiful, and so are the different races. And this is what children really need to understand, that even thou there is differences, those differences are what make every person beautiful and unique.

Works Cited

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