

# Responding to Racial Microaggressions

## How do we prepare ourselves and our children to respond to racial harm?

Scholar Buffie Longmire-Avital's research investigates parent perceptions and parent experiences around talking and thinking about race and racism in the Jewish community. She focuses on a number of areas including representation in media, microaggressions or racial harm, and how parents are and are not speaking with their children about race. Here we explore some of her conclusions and the implications for conversations about race within the Jewish community.

### GOALS

- Participants will explore why representation is important.
- Participants will discuss how to increase representation in their homes.
- Participants will have a working knowledge of microaggressions or racist harm.
- Participants will consider ways to disrupt racist harm.

### MATERIALS

- "What's in Your Library?" Buffie Longmire-Avital  
<https://vimeo.com/784628579/af6b0f03b0>
- "Teenagers Discuss Microaggressions and Racism" Hatchkids  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RfwnibEd3A>

## LESSON

### *Introduction: 1 minute*

Buffie Longmire-Avital's research investigates parent perceptions and parent experiences around talking and thinking about race and racism in our Jewish community. She focuses on a number of areas including representation in media, microaggressions or racial harm, and how parents are and are not speaking with their children about race. Today, we will focus on representation and microaggressions or racial harm.

### *Warm-up: 5 minutes*

- Adults share a favorite book you had at about your child's age
- Youth share a favorite book

### *Discussion: 15 minutes*

- Watch "What's in Your Library?"
  - What does representation mean?
  - Have you experienced a time when you were surprised that a part of your identity and who you are was represented well in the media?
  - If it was a part of your identity that is rarely spoken about, how did you feel?
- With a parent or peer, think about the books that you've read and owned (these books can also include books that you've read for school) and the shows that you watch, take notes if wanted.
  - Who is represented?
  - Are there any questions about who or how that person is being represented?
  - Do you think there are groups that are not well represented?

### *Discussion: 10 minutes*

Another big part of Dr. Longmire-Avital's work focused on microaggressions or harmful incidents in the Jewish community. Let's first watch a video with teens about microaggressions.

- Watch “Teenagers Discuss Microaggressions and Racism” Hatchkids  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RfwnibEd3A>
  - What stood out to you?
  - Was there anything that just seemed inaccurate?
  - Have you experienced microaggressions?
  - Have you said or acted out a microaggression?

*Activity: 20 minutes*

Once we understand what microaggressions are and the harmful impacts they cause, we can first work on not doing them ourselves and then think about how to intervene when they do happen in front of us. We have two scenarios for two small groups to work on. Please write a script for one of the scenarios that includes a solution. **[Do not let the students act out the scenarios because that increases the likelihood of insensitivity and harm for JOC in the space.]**

## Scenario 1

You attend a predominately White Jewish day school and/or synagogue. You've become friendly with another student who has dark skin and appears to be Latin/x/e\*. One day you and a few friends are talking and you ask the student if both of their parents converted to Judaism or just one. What about the question makes it a microaggression? Write a script that includes a solution and an acknowledgment of the harm that was caused.

## Scenario 2

A group of teens is in their cabin at summer camp getting ready when a White camper tells a Black camper that her hair is so cool and reaches to touch it. What is it about this scenario that is wrong? What can the campers do? Write a script that includes a resolution and an acknowledgment of the harm that was caused.

Share out both scenarios in discussion.

*Close: 5 minutes*

Have each person share one thing that they can or will do when thinking about racial harm.

## RESOURCES

- “What exactly is a microaggression?” Jenee Desmond-Harris Vox News  
<https://www.vox.com/2015/2/16/8031073/what-are-microaggressions>

\*Latine originated within the Latine genderqueer community, because it’s easier to conjugate in Spanish and due to criticisms of the anglicization of “Latinx.” Like identity, language is constantly evolving, and we look forward to seeing how this conversation continues.