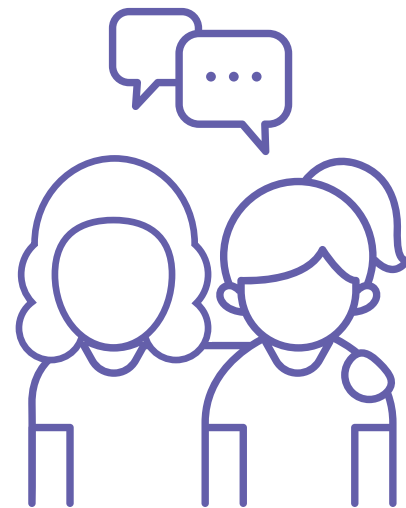


RACIAL SENSITIVITY GUIDE for Big Sisters

The best mentors know that learning is a never-ending process. It is important to continuously educate yourself independent of your match relationship – not only for your own benefit, but for your ability to help support your Little Sister through the relevant challenges she may face.

The purpose of this Racial Sensitivity Guide is to provide additional support to Big Sisters in their ongoing journey. For Big Sisters, primarily those who are white identifying, navigating conversations around race with your Little Sister and her family can be challenging. We hope this guide aids you in pushing your boundaries of comfort and showing up in new ways for yourself and your Little Sister. As you read through, we encourage you to keep an open mind about topics that may be new or unfamiliar to you.

The information highlighted in this guide is not all encompassing or exhaustive. Please be sure to utilize your Match Support Specialist for guidance in tandem with this resource.



BIGSISTERBOSTON

INTRODUCING BASIC FRAMEWORKS AROUND

Race & Equity

The following resource list provides pertinent definitions and their applications for use.

- ✓ Defining [ally and allyship](#)
- ✓ [Defining Brave Spaces](#), and comparing to [Safe Spaces](#)
- ✓ Understanding [racism](#), [white supremacy](#) and [white supremacy culture](#)
- ✓ [Helpful definitions](#)
- ✓ [White privilege](#)
- ✓ [Defining racial justice](#)
- ✓ [Exploring different forms of privileges](#)
- ✓ [The complexity of identity](#)
- ✓ [Understanding micro-aggressions](#)



DIVE

Deeper

There are many facets to racial injustice. If you're not a person of color (POC) with the lived experience of navigating systemic and interpersonal racism, learning about racism can be overwhelming at the start. Just remember this is not nearly as overwhelming as the ways in which POC must deal with the harm of racism in their daily lives. All of us, no matter our identities, have an opportunity to adjust to a much-needed new lens, listen with more discerning ears, and speak powerfully in truth. As a Big Sister, your commitment is to inspire your Little Sister to reach her greatest potential. Within these crucial times, there is an opportunity for you to consciously be present for your Little Sister. It doesn't matter which worthy topic you choose to focus on first; what matters is that you dive deeper.

Learn about the [power of privilege](#), or what [adultification bias](#) is and why it must end. When you hear your Little Sister (or her friends) talk about teachers they don't like at school, it takes on a *totally different context* once you understand how kids of color are impacted in [classroom spaces](#) and [beyond](#), or why [representation matters](#), and how you can learn from [the voices of Gen Z](#).

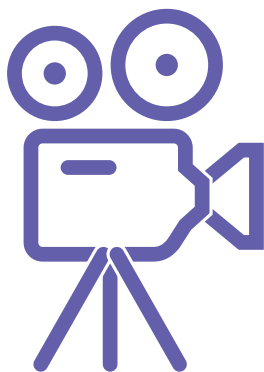
There are also plenty of reading lists to help you navigate racial issues through the lens of history, personal experiences, and solutions to present-day problems throughout society. This list encourages allies to [lean into learning](#) and [explore how to show up](#). Local libraries also have free databases that centralize [social justice](#) and [anti-racism resources](#).





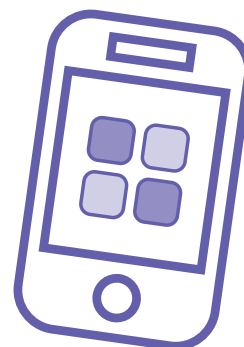
If you prefer **audio-learning**, there are podcasts on the [flawed educational system](#), [racial diversity](#), [culturally significant figures](#), [allyship](#), and [more relevant topics](#) featuring many voices of people of color (POC). Explore more podcasts: [here](#).

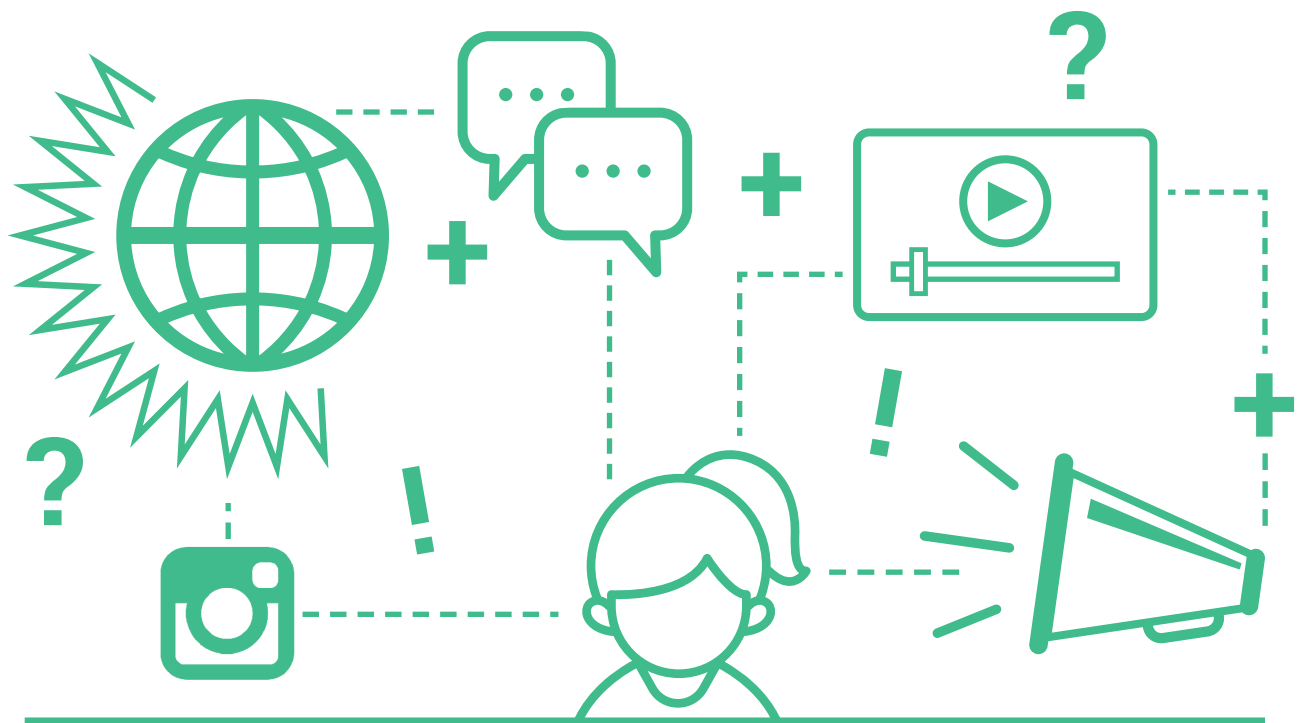
TV and movies can help you deepen your understanding of institutionalized racism, bias, and cultural/racial differences, while also aiding in self-reflection. This list of documentaries [highlights Black women](#) at the top of their game.



If you aren't already, try engaging with **media** that centers [Black culture and Black actors](#) not for learning or dissecting trauma, but for pure entertainment and cultural value. That's important, too.

Also, be sure to check out and follow social media platforms of [educators and advocates](#) who are furthering [anti-racism work](#) and [intersectional LGBTQ work](#).





TALKING ABOUT RACE WITH Your Little Sister

In the aftermath of racist violence seen across the country (and globe) your Little Sister may have a lot on her mind. It is important to remember that your Little Sister may or may not want to have conversations around race or racist violence with you – which is okay. If she does, then as a Big Sister it's essential for you to learn how to approach these conversations in ways that are intentional, supportive, and centered on her well-being. These articles are a good place to start learning how to begin these conversations:

- [Racism and Violence: How to Help Kids Handle the News](#)
- [Talking to children after racial incidents](#)
- [What White Children Need to Know About Race](#)
- [Supporting Kids Of Color In the Wake Of Racialized Violence](#)
- [Mass Mentoring Guide: Culturally Responsive Mentoring](#)
- [Safe Space Radio: Talking to White Kids about Race and Racism](#)

HOW RACE PLAYS A ROLE

In Your Relationship

Whether or not your Little wants to have discussions on race, the world around us is filled with messages; as a Big Sister, being mindful of the way you think and speak can silently show that you're doing the work and are a worthy confidant. For instance: have you ever described long straight blonde hair as "angelic", a common fairytale trait? Now think about the opposite of the word *angelic*, then the opposite of *long, straight, blonde* hair. This is one example of how messages are conveyed beyond the surface of our words. If you've already made it a point to comment more on the beauty of brown-skinned people, ask yourself, *are they usually of lighter skin tone or other Eurocentric standard?* Read on to learn more about racial dynamics to consider and check in with your Match Support Specialist for more information on the scenarios below.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF HAIR

The articles and podcasts below have more information on why the topic of hair is so important and can minimize potential microaggressions when there is a lack of understanding of the culture and history surrounding this topic.

- [A Brief Understanding of Black Hair, Politics, and Discrimination](#)
- [Stop Asking Black People If You Can Touch Their Hair](#)
- [How the Natural Hair Movement has Failed Black Women](#)
- [Hair Love](#): a short film
- [Why is Black Hair a Thing](#): Token Podcast

Scenario

1

You and your Little Sister just got matched, it's the middle of summer, and you plan your first visit – a trip to the beach! You arrive and are excited to get in the water and cool off, but your Little Sister doesn't want to swim because she doesn't want to get her hair wet. *No, she's not trying to be difficult with you. There are so many reasons she may not want to get her hair wet.*

Scenario

2

You and your Little Sister just got matched, it's the middle of summer, and you plan your first visit – a trip to the beach! You arrive and your Little Sister races you to the ocean and dives in, splashing with laughter. After you both catch your breath, you tell her "Wow, that was fun! I wasn't expecting that – I thought Black girls don't like getting their hair wet?" She stops smiling and walks back to the sand. *What do you think went wrong?*

COLORISM

It's a hurtful truth that POC face not only racism, but also the added prejudice of colorism, or biases based on shades of skin color. Understanding colorism can help you unpack any of your own unconscious assumptions and be more mindful of the way you allow others to communicate with, or in front of, your Little Sister.

The following list aims to help Big Sisters recognize and challenge the dangerous effects of anti-Black beauty standards, prejudiced thought, and the cultural hierarchy it creates throughout society.

- [What's Colorism?](#)
- [Dark Girls documentary](#) & [Dark Girls 2 documentary](#)
- [Light Girls documentary](#)
- [Colorism and White Latinx Privilege](#)
- [The Souls of Black Girls](#)
- [Own Your I Am](#)

Scenario

You and your Little Sister are enjoying a picnic lunch when a friendly elderly woman stops to chat with the two of you. At some point, she turns to your Little Sister and says with a smile, "I've never seen such an exotic-looking girl like you– you're so beautiful for a dark girl!" *How do you respond? Do you decide to talk to your Little Sister afterward or in the moment? Do you address it with your Match Support Specialist?*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A name is one of the first forms of identities we're given. So much of our culture and who we are is wrapped up in a little package of a few words, but those few words can affect how the world sees us. Studies show that names thought to be "ethnic" or "Black-sounding" are less likely to be hired for jobs and are often stigmatized with bigoted terms like "ghetto," "unintelligent," or other stereotypes. The truth is, there is a rich history to the unique names, spellings, and pronunciations showcased throughout Black and other ethnic heritages. They deserve to be celebrated for cultural significance. Imagine the effect this has on your Little Sister each time someone changes her name without asking permission, neglects to write the apostrophe, tilde, hyphen, or mispronounces her name altogether.

- [Yes, Pronouncing Kamala Harris' Name is a Big Deal. Here's Why](#)
- [Baby Names: Should it Matter if they indicate your race?](#)
- [Black sounding Names and their Surprising History](#)
- [Our Evolving Black American Naming](#)

Scenario

You and your Little Sister, Ni'Kaya, have been matched 3 months and have really been enjoying your time together. You come to pick Ni'Kaya up one day for a visit and get to meet her cousin, Tesha, for the first time. You call to your Little Sister, "ready to go Nicki?" Tesha looks shocked and mentions Ni'Kaya strongly dislikes that nickname.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS AND IT AFFECTS YOUR LITTLE SISTER

Most often representation refers to seeing similarities of oneself represented in media spaces. A lack of representation can lead to the erasure of your Little's identity in the social constructs that determine her path. As the saying goes "you can't be what you can't see". The opportunity for your Little Sister to view one, or many, aspects of her identity in the media allows this developing young woman to envision her potential. Review the links below for more information on both the necessity and limitations of representation.

- [Why on-screen representation matters according to teens](#)
- [When Representation Isn't Enough](#)

- [Black, Latinx, and Indigenous Leaders Share Their Thoughts](#)
- [Why Do Asian Americans Remain Largely Unseen in Film and television?](#)
- [Representation for Black Women Is More Than a Request, It's a Necessity](#)
- [LGBTQ kids feeling seen](#)

How can you keep representation in mind during match visits?

- Start with the books you are reading, the shows you are watching, the games you are playing: Do they have diverse lead characters? Is your Little Sister able to see her race, gender, sexual identity, or others represented by the media you choose together? Do those representations respect her culture, and show a variety of character strengths?
- Be mindful of your surroundings: How diverse are the communities you spend time in with your Little Sister? How often do you explore your Little Sister's neighborhood?

Scenario

Your Little Sister has always said she wants to be a ballerina. You were so excited to get free tickets to a show for your Little Sister. Afterward your Little Sister shares she's not sure if she can be a ballerina anymore. You ask her why not, and she states that no one on stage looked like her. How can you diversify your visits moving forward to inspire your Little Sister again?

THINK INTENTIONALLY

About Your Activities

Historically, POC have been left out of media conversations and school lessons, often leaving kids of color feeling forgotten and insignificant. Here are recommendations that are culturally and racially relevant for you and your Little Sister to explore together. As always, the lists below are not exhaustive but are curated to help your match begin exploring together. Please be sure to follow age-appropriate guidelines with your Little Sister.

BOOKS

- [1000 Black Girl Books](#) Database– started in 2015 by then 11-year-old activist [Marley Dias](#)
- [Colour of Us](#) Booklist of Native/ Indigenous main characters
- [Embrace Race](#) List of children's books featuring kids of color being themselves
- [Diverse Books](#) A resource list featuring award winning authors who identify as Black, Latinx, Arab Muslim/Islamic, South Asian, LGBTQ+ & more
- [Common Sense Media](#) Books that promote diversity and inclusion
- [Afro-Latinx Authors](#) children's and young adult literature

TV SHOWS/MOVIES

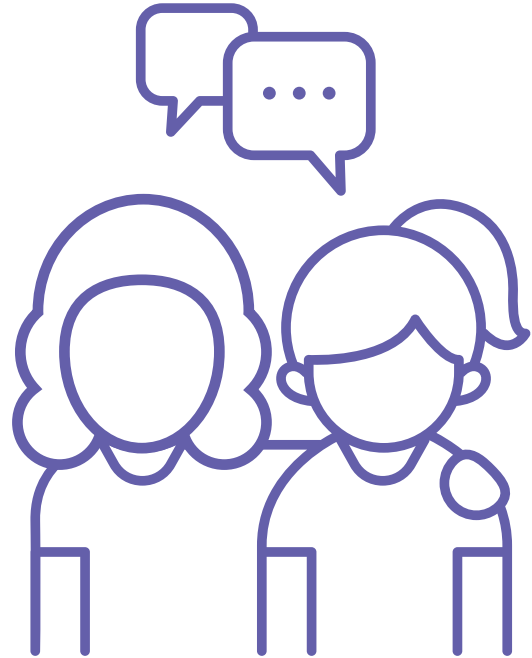
- [Common Sense Media: List of TV Shows with Diverse Characters](#)
- [15 TV shows that Got Diversity *Mostly* Right](#)
- [Inclusive Family TV Shows to Watch](#)
- [ShadowAndAct.com](#): Subscribe to the free newsletter to hear about new films, shows, and web-series with Black main characters!

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

- [Smithsonian: 8 Online Exhibits to see right now on Black History Protest & Racism](#)
- [Cooper Gallery of African and Afro American Art](#)
- [Dorchester Art Project](#) Join the mailing list to stay informed!
- [Spontaneous Celebrations](#) Community Center that hosts local events like the Jamaica Pond Lantern Festival!



KEEP THE Conversation Going!



If you need additional advice for engaging in conversations about race with your Little Sister, here are some tips adapted from [Yoopie's Guide to Black Lives Matter](#) that can help you feel more prepared. Be sure to explore their guide even further for more helpful language and examples. We want to acknowledge that this site is from the UK. Conversations about racial justice are happening internationally, and although this organization is based in the UK, the information and topics covered resonate strongly with experiences in the US.

TIP #1

REASON IT OUT. Explain to your Little Sister that you want them to be able to talk about these topics to normalize and validate how they are feeling. Reassure them that it's okay to be upset or confused, and it's okay to share if you are too.

- Remember that if your Little Sister would rather not talk about racial injustice, that is also okay.
- For older Little Sisters, try an empowering activity like reading more about issues together or finding volunteer opportunities. It's a great way to connect with the community, learn more nuance within issues, and practice solutions-based actions.

**TIP
#2**

ADJUST THE LENS. Frame race and present inequalities through a lens that will resonate with your Little Sister.

- *Some helpful language:* "If you and another child did the same thing; and you were punished for it, yet they got a prize...do you think that's fair?"
- Remember that your Little Sister's lens and understanding of racism may already be more developed. It may be helpful to ask them questions about their understanding of race and recent events and let them guide the conversation. Having these conversations can help them process these events and learn about social justice.
- Regardless of age, many youth have a deep understanding of race relations and current events due to their [lived experiences](#) and access to social media.

**TIP
#3**

HIGHLIGHT POSITIVE CHANGE. Be sure to highlight positive steps and progression towards change. Some examples can include new laws, popular brands changing their workplaces and marketing to address racism, diverse candidates winning elections, and [Black businesses](#) receiving increasing amounts of support. This can help the conversation leave your Little Sister feeling more optimistic and empowered, rather than helpless. Websites like [Because Of Them We Can](#) follow the recent achievements of Black people across the country and globe.

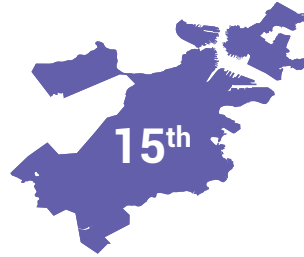
DID YOU

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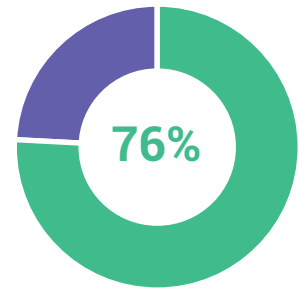
The Net worth of Black Bostonians really is \$8.
Whites Have \$247K
(data conducted 2000 to 2012)

Black girls are 4x more likely to be disciplined in schools than white girls



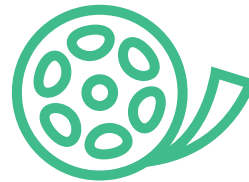
Of the country's 51 greater metropolitan areas, Boston ranks 15th for segregation

76% of Americans consider racism and discrimination a "big problem," up from 51% in 2015



In 2020, we saw increased recognition of Juneteenth as a holiday from various companies and organizations

Black Market Nubian hosts a pop-up shop featuring Black artisans



The Roxbury International Film Festival is the largest festival in New England that celebrates people of color

Your Match Support Specialist is here to help if you have questions about this toolkit (or anything else on your mind!)

