

# 10 YEARS OF BUILDING A MOVEMENT





Dear Friends,

**This spring marks ten years since we launched EmbraceRace. A decade!**

In 2016 we were co-parents looking for resources and community to help us raise our two brown-skinned children in a world where race and racial ideas would shape their experiences and opportunities. Finding little for parents or for young children, we set out to create what we needed—and what it seemed others did too.

Today, EmbraceRace reaches tens of thousands of caregivers and educators through our podcast, learning communities, and resources like the *Drawing Differences Arts Program* and the *Color-Brave Caregiver Framework*. Last May, we brought together 200-plus leaders in Chicago for the first-ever *National Convening on Children's Racial Learning*—a watershed moment for the emerging field.

The landscape we're working in now isn't easy. Book bans, attacks on immigrant children and families—or those thought to be—and funding cuts are very real. And yet, zooming out, we see powerful reasons for hope and perseverance.

**Over the last 15 years or so, we've seen growing recognition that children's racial learning begins in infancy and continues throughout our lives.** The American Academy of Pediatrics has affirmed racism as a determinant of child health and development. Research has flourished. Many more parents seek guidance now than did when we started. This is a movement with momentum and work to do.

To organizational partners like the Greater Good Science Center, FrameWorks Institute, and the Mead Museum at Amherst College; funders like Kellogg, Heising-Simons, and Wayfarer; and our consultants, collaborators, donors, and volunteers—thank you! We cannot recognize you all by name here, but we're so grateful to stand with you in this work.

We also offer big love and admiration to our small-but-mighty staff, past and present. With your smarts, care, and peerless sock puppets, you have been perfect companions on this journey.

**After ten years, Gentle Reader, we're asking you to recommit with us.** Support this work as you can with your voice, networks, and resources. Let's build a movement for the long haul.

With gratitude and determination,



**Melissa Giraud & Andrew Grant-Thomas**  
Co-founders & Co-directors, EmbraceRace



**“We should be investing in children’s racial learning as if it’s an important part of child development ... because it is!”**

**– MELISSA GIRAUD**

# Our Approach

Children are learning about race every day through media, classrooms, playgrounds, and the silence of adults who feel unprepared to address it. At a time when public discourse about race is being silenced, the need for racial literacy has never been more urgent. Families are asking for help. Educators are seeking guidance. If we don't teach children to talk about race with honesty and empathy, bias and misinformation will fill that void.

EmbraceRace is organizing a national movement to ensure that every child learns about race with curiosity, courage, and compassion. Our approach centers on learning by design, not by accident. We underline the importance of what children learn about race ("children's racial learning") and champion "children's racial literacy": the ability to understand, talk about, and navigate race in healthy, just, and joyful ways.

# Our Theory of Change

EmbraceRace envisions a vibrant U.S. society in which children grow into community members who are **thoughtful, informed, and brave** about race and work together toward equity and justice.

## OUR WORK



### RESOURCE BUILDING

Caregivers have access to resources and information to support their individual learning journeys about race, racism, and children's racial learning.



### COMMUNITY BUILDING

Caregivers engage with peers in community spaces that support members' ongoing racial learning work with the children in their lives.



### FIELD BUILDING

Caregivers and communities are embedded in environments and institutions that facilitate healthy teaching and learning about race.

## A CROSS-SECTORAL MOVEMENT TO RAISE GENERATIONS OF U.S. CHILDREN WHO ARE:



Resilient and Joyful



Inclusive and Empathetic



Critical Thinkers About Race



Committed Racial Justice Advocates

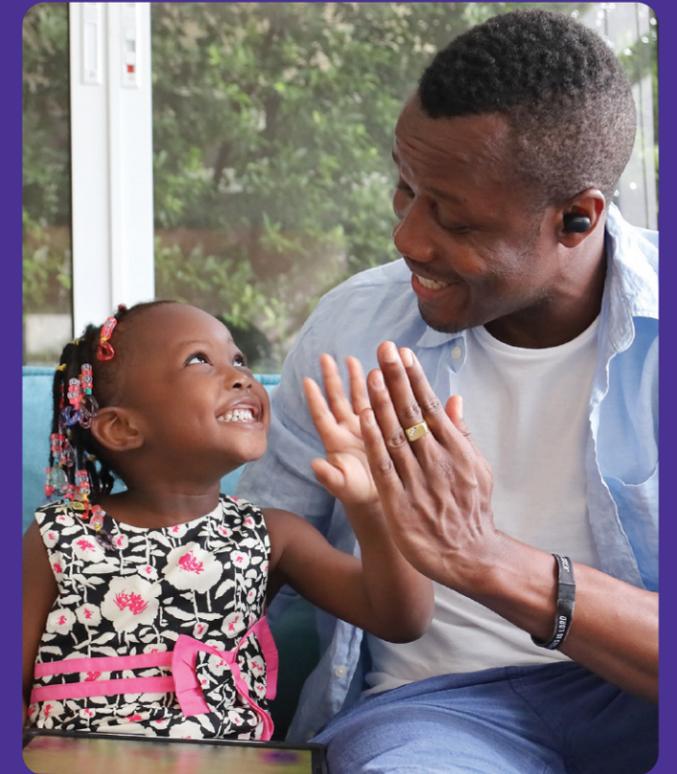
## 10 YEARS AT-A-GLANCE

"I used to think 'I have to get it right.' Now I think 'I have to keep showing up.'"

- FOUNDATIONS CLASS PARTICIPANT

"It feels like EmbraceRace is one of few, if not the only, places exploring what kind of multi-racial, joyful and caring world we want for our kids and for our future."

- CHRISTINE, DONOR



### RESOURCES



200K+ webinar views



1.2 million web users

### COMMUNITY



1000+ participants in learning cohorts, classes and workshops



5000+ educators reaching hundreds of thousands of kids

### FIELD BUILDING



200+ leaders attended our 2025 National Convening on Children's Racial Learning



95% of organizations identified EmbraceRace as a key leader in the field

It started with two parents, a question, and 202 newsletter subscribers.



## 2015

EmbraceRace soft-launches with a **Facebook page**.

## 2016

EmbraceRace **officially launches with 12 bloggers** and seed money from the Kellogg Foundation.

The **community surges** during a summer of racialized violence and again after the presidential election.

## 2018

EmbraceRace featured in **NBC's Erase the Hate spotlight**.



## 2017

EmbraceRace starts to host regular **webinars** and produces research-informed **Action Guides**, all in collaboration with a big tent of guests and experts.

## 2020 AFTER GEORGE FLOYD IS MURDERED:



15,000 people register for EmbraceRace webinars in one week.



EmbraceRace experiences a surge in demand and support.



First staff member hired beyond the founders. EmbraceRace starts to host webinars nearly every week.



## 2025

The first-ever **National Convening on Children's Racial Learning** brings together 200+ leaders across five key sectors.

More core resources and community classes debut.



**50,000+** community members

**200+** leaders convened

**A National Movement** taking shape

## 2026+

More research-informed tools, community spaces and events, and field-building initiatives.

**How Kids Actually Learn About Race**



## 2024

**Podcast Season 1** garners 10,000+ downloads with an 80% listen-through rate.

EmbraceRace's Drawing Differences inspires a **Mead Art Museum exhibit**. The exhibit attracts a multigenerational audience of thousands. **UMass evaluation** partnership begins. EmbraceRace expands its **trainings to faith networks**.

## 2023

**Drawing Differences** art lessons and Foundations classes launched. **Reflections on Children's Racial Learning** report published.



## 2021-2022

The **R3 Network** launched, connecting families with researchers studying children's racial learning. EmbraceRace **featured in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, CNN, The NY Times, NPR**.

The organization develops its first **strategic plan**, creates the **Color-Brave Caregiver Framework and Practices**, collaborates on a **National Parent Survey**, and launches its first **caregiver learning cohorts**.

“Systems shape the behaviors of people and groups, but people also create and re-create those systems. If you want to create better systems, you need to nurture better agents.” - ANDREW GRANT-THOMAS

200+

leaders convened

5 sectors

Research, Education, Healthcare, Media, Parenting

95%

identified EmbraceRace as a key leader in the field

91%

expressed willingness to join cross-sector working groups

## Field Building

### NATIONAL CONVENING ON CHILDREN'S RACIAL LEARNING.

A landmark gathering to fuel an emerging field.

#### The Moment

In May 2025, as federal funding cuts, a DEI backlash, and book bans swept across the country, EmbraceRace brought together 200+ leaders from five core sectors for the first-ever National Convening on Children's Racial Learning in Chicago. The gathering was both a response to a contentious moment and an act of collective imagination.

#### Why Now

Despite political and cultural backlash against racial equity work, this is a promising moment to accelerate the emergence of a national field focused on children's racial learning.

- Research on racial learning has advanced significantly in the last decade
- More organizations than ever are focused on supporting racial learning in schools, libraries, media, and community spaces
- Parents are eager for tools to help their children understand race and racism

**How and what U.S. children learn about race is now a public concern in ways it simply wasn't a generation ago.**



#### What Emerged

The convening opened space for radical imagining. In breakout sessions, participants envisioned a world in 2030 where children's racial learning is broadly recognized as a core developmental domain. Where equity is foundational, not aspirational. Where all children and families feel visible and valued.

Participants identified strategies to advance the field: centering healing and wellness, developing shared language and messaging, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and building infrastructure to support long-term integration across education, healthcare, and media.

#### Meeting the Moment

Despite significant challenges, organizations at the convening demonstrated remarkable resilience—mobilizing against book bans, defending international students, and challenging harmful policies in court.

Our strength comes from leaning into our values, building community, and remembering that a large majority of US parents want support in fostering healthy racial learning among children.

**That's reason for hope.**

**“In a time when legal and financial risks have stifled many voices, the convening provided a much-needed space for open dialogue and action.”**

— KEYONA KING-TSIKATA, APA



**“This work isn't optional. It's critical to the survival and humanity of my children and children who look like mine.”**

— JASMINE HOOD MILLER



## Community Building

At EmbraceRace, we started by creating resources for caregivers but then quickly moved to create the community spaces needed for caregivers to share and apply knowledge, whether through webinars, small group classes or in-person events.

In our first eight years, we hosted more than 80 webinars featuring guests of diverse experience and expertise across a wide range of topics related to kids and race, along with lively chats and engaged Q & A.

Over the past four years, EmbraceRace has offered small-group learning opportunities, including quarter-long classes, 10-week learning and practice cohorts, and 2-hour workshops. More than 1,000 people have participated—parents, educators, grandparents, librarians, pediatricians, social workers, therapists, and administrators.

Participants have learned to engage in age-appropriate conversations about race and racism, and understand their roles as caregivers and guides in their children’s learning.

Our workshops have addressed a wide range of topics, most recently a series on “Nurturing a Positive Racial Identity,” with sessions tailored to caring for children of different racial identities. Participants engaged with racial identity development models, learned practical strategies and techniques, and practiced responding to real-life scenarios.

**1000+**

participants since 2022

**60%**

returning participants



Nationwide reach!

## OUR FACILITATORS

Our fantastic facilitators help design our highly-interactive curricula. They bring expertise across education, curriculum development, social work, and equity work, along with personal stories and thoughtful coaching.



Brittany Del Rosario



Liz Hart-Walker



Darcy Heath



Natania Kremer



Mirna Mejia



Nicol Russell



Tina Sykes

## We launched our *Drawing Differences* art lessons in 2023 to address the underrepresentation of diverse characters in children’s drawings.

The lessons encourage kids and their adults to observe closely, draw across racial differences, and talk about what they see and experience. The lessons have since been used in homes, schools, libraries, and museums all over the U.S.

In November of 2024, we collaborated with the Mead Museum of Art at Amherst College when it opened *Re/Presenting: Art Beyond the Color Line*, an exhibit inspired by *Drawing Differences*’ thematic emphasis on looking closely, seeing color, seeing individuals, and feeling seen. The exhibit drew a multigenerational crowd, featured over 80 works of art, encouraged conversation about representation, and featured opportunities to draw and read diverse picture books together.

In April 2025, we brought children’s author/illustrators Raúl Colón, Grace Lin, and Oge Mora together with children and families to the exhibit space to draw across differences and talk about what they were drawing. Like the kids, the illustrators drew each other. They spoke about their experiences drawing themselves and other people of color, and spent time with kid artists who wanted to share their drawings and get advice.



## RE/PRESENTING: ART BEYOND THE COLOR LINE

Attendance and Programs Report (November 11, 2024–July 6, 2025)

**7,388**

people visited Mead exhibitions when *Re/Presenting* was on view. *Not including visitors who were part of organized class visits or tours.*

### 690 student visits

45 classes dedicated to *Re/Presenting*, served 500 K-12 students. 12 college classes, served 190 people.

### 810 attendees

18 related public programs had 810 attendees, representing a mix of children, college students, and adults of all ages.



**128 visitors** attended the *KidLit* artists talk with Grace Lin, Raúl Colón, and Oge Mora

[Watch event highlights](#)

*Offered in partnership with the Mead Museum the Jones Library and the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst, MA.*

## Resource Building

When we began EmbraceRace a decade ago, there were few resources aimed at parents and caregivers interested in supporting healthy racial learning in young children. We have been creating and curating resources ever since, collaborating with practitioners and researchers to make the best research and guidance available and usable. Our 2022 *Color-Brave Caregiver Framework and Practices* integrates and advances our earlier work, providing core tools that anchor our approach and support caregivers' continued growth.



“

I trained my team on your slides and Color Brave Caregiver Framework—and planned how to layer that topic with our parent education workshop. The team loved the content, understood it, and understood the importance of it.”

— KATEE, DIRECTOR OF A LITERACY ORGANIZATION

More recently we have added key pieces to our set of core EmbraceRace resources. Here are a few from 2025:



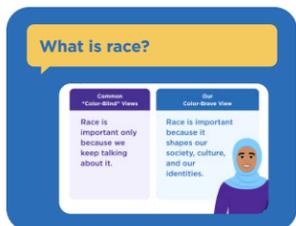
### AGES & STAGES GUIDE

Drawing on the latest research, the guide highlights how children understand race at different ages, from infancy through early adolescence. It offers practical suggestions for responding to children's curiosities and building their understanding of race in developmentally appropriate ways.



### CAREGIVER TOOLKIT FOR RAISING ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

Launched during AAPI Heritage Month, this toolkit includes videos, discussion questions, activities, book lists, and roleplay scenarios—addressing themes like cultural connection, intergenerational stories, activism, and managing experiences of racism and bias. It was created in partnership with researchers and informed by the Asian American Families Study. We will create additional toolkits in 2026!



### “COLOR-BLIND” OR COLOR-BRAVE?

A side-by-side breakdown of two very different mindsets about race and kids. The resource encourages caregivers to reflect on their own perspectives and take steps toward more inclusive, informed conversations about race.

“

The The Ages and Stages guide takes research I have quoted for a long time now and brought it to life! I would like to include it as a handout in our training of trainers, which would then get it in the hands of thousands of early childhood educators.”

— RM, TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINER

“

This is great. I sometimes worry how disconnected my kids are from their cultural heritage because they are 3rd gen, but thinking of these elements, we have more cultural touchpoints than I realized in our home.”

— CAREGIVER, ASIAN AMERICAN TOOLKIT



## Our Supporters

### INDIVIDUAL DONORS

EmbraceRace is grateful for the hundreds of individuals who have donated to support our work. In a time when institutional funding is disappearing, individual donors matter more than ever. When you donate and get your networks to donate, you are supporting the just community the great majority of us want. This is a make or break period for this work. Join us and spread the word!

We are grateful to our monthly donors who have chosen to invest in a sustained way in EmbraceRace and for the creative ways that so many in our community tap into their own talents and networks to fuel our efforts.

### INSTITUTIONS THAT DONATED IN 2025



- Heising-Simons Foundation
- The Hershey Company
- MLK Fine Arts, LLC
- Sheetz Inc.
- Wayfarer Foundation

“Let’s make sure what we aim for is big enough to be worth the effort. That’s my promise—we’re going for it.”

— ANDREW GRANT-THOMAS

Dear EmbraceRace Community,

As EmbraceRace marks its tenth year, I find myself thinking about children and about time. Ten years is a long stretch in the life of an organization, but only a blink in the life of a child. In those early years, children form ideas about themselves, about others, and about how the world works. What adults do in that window—what we say, what we model, what we avoid—matters deeply.

I learned this as a classroom teacher. I can still picture the children who arrived each morning carrying big questions they didn’t yet have language for. They were watching closely. They were making meaning. When adults stayed silent, they filled in the gaps on their own. EmbraceRace has spent the past decade helping adults understand that silence isn’t neutral, and that honesty, offered with care, is an act of responsibility and love.

**EmbraceRace has been wonderfully steady. Grounded in research and lived experience, it has consistently centered relationships and treated families and educators as true partners.** It has created space for adults to learn together, to practice, to stumble, and to stay in the work with humility and accountability.

This work is not easy, especially in a landscape shaped by fear and fatigue. But as Andrew and Melissa remind us, this is a movement for the long haul. Movements endure because people recommit, again and again, to shared responsibility.

As we look ahead, I am grateful for this community and confident in what is possible. **Our children are watching. May we continue to show them what care, courage, and collective action look like.**

With gratitude and resolve,

*N. Russell*



Nicol Russell, EdD  
Chair, EmbraceRace Advisory Board



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Learn more at [embracerace.org](https://embracerace.org).