



End of the Year Report 2017-2018

COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL

“Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of differences but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.”

—bell hooks



Martin Luther King Jr. set forth the ideal of a “Beloved Community” as a place of belonging for all people. It is a place of inclusion, love and peace. bell hooks further describes the “Beloved Community” as a space where all people can bring their full self and be celebrated. While its origins are global and vast, this idea of a community of love, acceptance and respect for all people very much describes my vision and aspirations for our small Greenhouse community.

In my welcome address at the beginning of this school year, I shared with the parent body that our faculty’s professional development inquiry topic this year was on identity development, with a special lens on race identity. Throughout this year, we delved deeply into our collective understanding of how young children develop their full sense of self including their race, gender, culture, language, ability and family structure. This inquiry began with an intense, and sometimes emotional, inspection of our own sense of self. We reflected on our own experiences, biases and behaviors. We read books, visited other schools, attended conferences and worked with outside consultants. We invited parents into the work, as well. At times it got uncomfortable. At times we got it very wrong. At other times, we got it very right. We were able to see our learning come to life inside the classroom. The pages of this report are filled with reflections and images of our learning throughout the year and how it affected our interactions and shaped the curriculum with the children. Ultimately, this work is meant to ensure that every single child and family feels welcomed, acknowledged and valued at Greenhouse. While I feel a deep sense of urgency and wish to declare our work *fait accompli*, I understand that we are just at the beginning. It is a process that is long in scope, but has the potential to offer powerful dividends in the end for our children, community and beyond. I am thrilled and exhilarated by our collective efforts this year and it is with pride and a renewed sense of purpose, I look forward to another year of learning and living with you and your family in our beloved community of Columbia Greenhouse.

Warmly, Renee



Dear Greenhouse Community,

I am so inspired by the Greenhouse community: children, families, and faculty. When I walk through the classrooms, I am awed by what I see. Though each room has its own aesthetic, they all are organized to invite deep exploration and rich interaction; materials are inviting and open-ended. The classrooms are bursting with evidence of learning: complex block structures, bar graphs of family members, photographs of field trips, silhouettes of growing bodies, quotes and photographs of children at work. As an educator, I always take away ideas for my own classroom. As a Trustee, I am always reminded that Greenhouse provides the best possible early childhood experience.

The work of the Parent Association also continues to excite and impress me. I was on the Board of Trustees in 2005 when the Parent Association was created. At the time no one could have anticipated how vital the PA would become to the heart of the Greenhouse community. Most parent associations organize fundraisers but few create educational opportunities where families can learn and engage in real discussion about real concerns.

Finally, I am inspired by our faculty. Under Renee's leadership, they are constantly strengthening and deepening their practice, as evidenced by their continued commitment to write reports that families receive prior to conferences. I can't think of a better way to maximize the value of parent-teacher conferences. I will tell you frankly that not every faculty would have cooperated in adding this task to their workload. I am also impressed by the professional and adult development work our faculty and families did this year. Using the guiding question, "How can we best support the healthy identity development of all children with a specific lens on race?" and the support of Raising Race Conscious Children, the Greenhouse community leaned into what is arguably the most important issue in our country right now.

I don't exaggerate when I say that Greenhouse faculty set a high bar for the early childhood community. And I speak for all the Trustees when I say it is a privilege to be associated with the Greenhouse community.

Sincerely,

Sara Edlin, Chair of Columbia Greenhouse Board of Trustees





Understanding Identity Development in Young Children

“How can we best support the healthy identity development of all of our young children, with a specific lens on race?”
– our guiding inquiry question

“Only boys can play here!”

“Is that for pretend or for real that you have two moms at home?”

“I only want to play with the white doll.”

A person’s identity develops across the span of a life-time. Learning about who we are both as ourselves and in relationship to others is a long, complicated, evolving journey that begins in toddlerhood. At Greenhouse, we get to witness the very seeds of children’s identity as they begin to take root. Our children, as young as two, begin to notice, comment on and question the many differences that they see around them. Young children are sorting and categorizing information in order to make sense of the world. In each of the quotes above, we see them test out their theories of these differences directly in our classroom walls. We wondered: how can we help them challenge their thinking and construct a new understanding of the differences they are noticing? This year, the faculty at Greenhouse focused our professional development inquiry on understanding how young children develop identity and we explored ways we could best support them in that learning.

One’s social identity consists of various distinct (but intersecting) markers including racial, cultural, gender, family structure, economic, language, and religious identities. The first identity markers that young children tune in to are gender, family structure and race. Children learn about these identity markers through different ways including through their own family and through personal experiences in the larger world around them.

Young children develop in the context of their family. However, in direct contradiction to the commonly held belief that children mirror their parent’s understanding of and value for specific identity makers, research shows us that the opposite is true. Some of young children’s ideas about identity do not “significantly or reliably relate to those of their parents” (Winkler, E. 2009). Families must use both words and actions to clearly demonstrate their values and beliefs to young children. Because of their developing cognitive abilities, young children are prone to categorizing incorrectly or drawing ill-informed conclusions. Think of a young child’s theory that the moon follows them home at night or all four-legged animals are called dogs. Based on a child’s experience, these are sound conclusions to make, but they are not correct. The same is true about a young child’s conclusion about identity markers. Their experience might inform them that a “family” means a mom, dad and children; they may draw the conclusion that this is the right way to be a family. Left to their own devices (even if they develop inside a family that values all family structures) without clear communication about that value children will often draw incorrect conclusions. A child may conclude, “We can’t have a picnic with brown people,” simply because they never have had a picnic with people of color. This family may believe that their value set about race is in direct opposition to this statement but the child’s experience directly informs his conclusion. Without explicit experi-



ence *and* conversations, “We chose to live in this neighborhood because we think it is important to live in a community where there are people with all colors of skin,” a child is left alone to form his own conclusions about these identity differences.

Young children also develop in the context of a larger society; their personal experiences in the world also support their understanding of identity. These experiences can be explicit (“Big boys don’t cry!”) or implicit (balls, trucks and tigers hanging on the nursery wall). The indirect messages about identity that are imbedded in our social, legal and economic structures are sometimes so obscured and normalized, we do not realize the

“The first identity markers that young children tune in to are gender, family structure and race.”

impact they hold for young children. When a child sees their family treated poorly by a waiter or hears that no one speaks their home language at the doctor’s office, these messages can accrue across time and can harm a child’s sense of identity. Another way hidden messages are consumed by children is by who they see and who they do not see represented throughout their world. When young children look at books, watch movies or television shows and see advertisements that reflect mostly White people, children may learn that White is “normal” and other colors of skin are “other-than-normal.” When they consume images or read stories of children that are all able-bodied or typically developing, it makes children with different abilities seem scary or strange. The messages they receive outside in the world from teachers, the bus driver and the store clerk; from

ads, TV, and books; from hospitals, churches and school all intersect with the lessons from home to inform how young children see themselves *and* others.

With this knowledge that young children’s identity development is an ongoing journey that is formed inside the social context of the family and the world, how can the adults that love and care for children support a healthy sense of self and others? We need to become aware of these subtle messages our children are consuming and then we need to help them think critically about them. We need to create positive learning experiences that draw attention to people’s differences and similarities in order to give them a foundation for resisting the incorrect and harmful messages they may receive about themselves or others. We need to directly interrupt the messages that society and the world feed our children; these messages can be counteracted if we pay attention to them and intentionally work to build a healthy sense of self. We need to respect the journey and know that we are in this for the long haul. Developing a healthy sense of self isn’t done with one conversation or one art project or reading one book. Our children’s sense of identity will grow, develop and change across time; we need to be there for them to talk to, lean on and learn from for the full ride. We need to help children develop a full and positive sense of themselves so that they can feel the power of and channel their own agency to thrive in a complicated, diverse world.



Race Conscious vs Colorblind: why we name race with young children.

Young children notice things; they discover the tiniest ants crawling on the sidewalk. Young children question things; ‘why is the sky blue?’ Young children differentiate; they put the square peg in the square hole. Yet, there is a widely held belief that young children do not see or notice skin color. This thinking spurs grown-ups, especially white grown-ups, to not name or discuss race with their children; people of color tend to talk more regularly with their children about race. Some might say our children are “too young” to talk about race; others might worry that talking about race will draw negative attention to our differences and will reinforce political and social divisions. They may believe that “we are all the same” mantras do more to lead us to equality than naming our differences. Others still are worried they will say the wrong thing or make a misstep. In fact, research tells us the opposite is true (Katz, 2003; Winkler, 2009; Olsen, K. 2013). Children notice differences of skin tone, hair style and bodies. Young children see and register these differences. And not talking about the differences teaches them something very clearly; our silence around these observable differences becomes its own message. Our silence sends the message that race is not to be discussed. Furthermore, when we hush our children’s observation (“Don’t say that!”) or ignore our children’s questions (“That’s not a polite question.”) we teach them that race is a topic that is off limits. While we might think our silence is intended to teach children that race doesn’t matter and we are all equal, the impact of our silence is the erasure of the lived experience of race. Promoting a ‘colorblind’ approach with our children denies an important piece of their own and others full identities. At Greenhouse, instead of encouraging our children to be “blind” to color, we want our children to see the beauty and richness that all skin colors and races bring to our community. Instead of erasing the differences, we want to embrace the differences as one of the things that make us a stronger community. Instead of ignoring the things that make us who we are, we want to bring them out into the light with pride, joy and love.

At Greenhouse, instead of encouraging our children to be “blind” to color, we want our children to see the beauty and richness that all skin colors and races bring to our community.

How does this look in the classroom at Greenhouse?

Our faculty worked with Raising Race Conscious Children (RRCC) over the course of this school year. We began our work with RRCC by practicing strategies and trying on language about race, in order to become more comfortable talking about race with children and each other. Many faculty members identified mixed emotions as they began this journey including excitement, fear, and discomfort. The first strategy we practiced was intentionally naming skin tone and race. The faculty thought deeply about identifying language that accurately describes skin tones, both in our meetings and in their work with children. In one classroom, while the children

were preparing to draw self-portraits, the children were asked to describe their own skin tone. The children replied with detailed descriptions like “dark and light lemony”, “bright brown”, “a little bit peach”, and “a little bit whitish and mostly pinkish.” A faculty member described how they felt that the “colors of the rainbow were very limiting” when trying to describe skin color. They were inspired by the book “All the Colors of the Earth” by Sheila Hamanaka where colors occurring in the natural world were used

to describe the wide variety of skin tones of people:

“Children come in all the colors of love. And in the shades of you and me. For love comes in cinnamon, walnut and wheat. Love is amber and ivory and ginger and sweet.”

Giving kids the language to describe skin tone lets them see value, beauty and acceptance in all the different tones of skin. This kind of experience and awareness of differences is a developmentally appropriate way to begin talking to our young children about race. Instead of a message of silence, we opened up a conversation about the many different skin tones found within our classrooms. We observed and sent a clear message that there was not a right (or wrong) skin tone; all skin tones are beautiful.

We also practiced naming race. While preschoolers do not understand the politics and history of racial group

terms, they do need adult help sorting out their ideas and getting correct information about race (Derman-Sparks, L. and Olsen Edwards, J., 2010). For example, all people have a racial identity. A faculty member identified one of their most salient learning moments as when they realized that White children need to develop and understand their “whiteness” as much as brown children need to develop their race identity. Often times, there is a misconception that conversations about race speak only about or for people of color; instead, it is important to realize that all people develop a race identity across time. Some faculty members experienced a personal struggle to move beyond describing skin tone and into naming race. One teacher reflected, “My comfort level with naming race is not up to the level I have gained with naming skin-tones.” This kind of honest, open reflection demonstrates our faculty’s own learning process and their commitment to active, life-long learning. Another faculty person states, “While my comfort level is not at a hundred percent yet, I feel like it is evolving and I will get there with time. Until then, I hope to listen more openly and continue these conversations.” And continue these conversations we will!



Derman-Sparks, L., Edwards, J. O., & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Katz, P. A. (2003). Racists or tolerant multiculturalists? How do they begin? *American Psychologist*, 58 (11), 897–909.

Olsen, K. (2013, April). *Are Kids Racist? (Not) talking about race with your child*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/developing-minds/201304/are-kids-racist>

Winkler, E. N. (2009, August). Children are not colorblind: How young children learn race. *PACE: Practical Approaches for Continuing Education*, 3(3), 1-8.

How does this sound in the classroom at Greenhouse?

Here are samples of actual experiences/conversations which happened inside our classrooms this year. Some are examples of us naming race in every day occurrences; some are examples of us helping children think critically about differences. Others are examples of the misconception that young children hold about differences and how our teachers helped to clarify and expand the child’s understanding.

Recollections from the teachers:

While reading *Everywhere Babies* by Susan Meyers, I noticed that the author used all kinds of descriptive language to talk about the babies but never described skin tone. So I added my own, “And look at this baby’s beautiful brown skin. And this baby’s beautiful pinkish skin.”

While doing family portraits, we looked at each child’s skin color and tried to find a shade of paper to match their skin tone. I said to a White child, “Some people call your skin color ‘White.’ Hm, does it match this white paper?” The children compared their skin to the paper. The child concluded that it did not match and selected a different shade. Another White child concluded that it did match and used the white paper.

A child said that I was brown like another child in the class. I said, “You are noticing that we both have brown skin.” We looked closely at our skin tones and decided that our skin tones are slightly different. We decided mine was like hot chocolate and the other child’s was like cinnamon.

A lunchtime conversation with one White child, one child of color and a teacher of color:

White child: “People in New York have this color skin (pointing to their own white arm) not that color skin (pointing to arm of the child of color). I think he came from another place.”

Teacher: “He lives in New York and so do I. We all have different skin tones.”

White child: “I don’t think they know when they came here from where they are from.”

Teacher: “Who?”

White child: “The people with that different skin.”

Child of color: “Everyone has different skin in New York.”

Teacher: “I agree (began naming skin tones of the friends in the class).”

White child: “Well, they don’t know where they came from.”

Teacher: “Some people with your color skin came from somewhere else too.”

White child: “Well I have never moved.”

Child of color: “Me neither!”

Teacher: “The color of someone’s skin cannot tell us where a person was born or where they are from. You would need to ask a person, ‘Were you born in New York? New Yorkers come in all shades of skin’.”

While making family portraits, a child mentioned that their skin does not look like their mom’s or dad’s, but it looks more like their sibling. Teacher responded with “How so?” The child described how their mom’s skin was darker than their dad’s skin. The child found shades of paper that matched their understanding of the various shades of skin in their family.

Dolly Williams, our beloved head teacher in the 4/5s, announced her retirement at the end of this school year. For over 20 years, Dolly has shared her gifts and love with the children, families and faculty of Greenhouse. Below Dolly shares one last gift: her personal story about race. Greenhouse will miss Dolly's daily presence in the halls but her legacy lives on inside the children's lives she has touched.



During one of our workshops with Raising Race Conscious Children, we were asked, “When was the first time that you realized your race?” I had to think about that for a while because I don’t remember not knowing that I am Black. Growing up in Jim Crow Alabama racial divisions and inequalities were abundantly clear. The visible signs of segregation were jarring; the invisible signs were hurtful and terrifying. Admittedly I was obliged to develop the “double consciousness” described by W.E.B. DuBois. That is, the feeling of being part of America, but not fully of it. Of always looking at myself through the lens of White America. Of always being prepared for ... disappointment. It was and sometimes still is a coping mechanism employed by millions in order to get along, get ahead and maintain a modicum of dignity.

I grew up in Tuskegee, Alabama. My childhood took place in a bubble of Black excellence. All of the people in my world were Black and very accomplished – teachers, librarians, doctors, nurses, college professors, military officers, clergy, business owners, artists. (Even the bums, layabouts and drunkards were Black.) Growing up all of my friends and school mates were Black. All of my parents’ friends were Black. It was a wonderfully self-affirming, comfortable environment that insisted – no, just assumed – that each child would be successful and live up to his or her full potential – because that’s what we do in Tuskegee; that’s what’s expected. So you can imagine my shock and surprise when I *really* realized what it meant to be Black.

It was a hot summer day. I was maybe seven or eight, riding with my Aunt Gwen on a shopping trip to Columbus, GA. She always made things so much fun and there was a bunch of us in the car that day. As the day dragged on we decided to stop to get something to eat. We pulled

into the dusty parking lot of a barbecue joint. “I hear they have the best barbecue here!” she said with anticipation. But before we could open the doors of the station wagon, a pimply-faced White adolescent scurried out of the restaurant and directed us to drive around to the back in order to get served, “You *girls* have to pull around back,” he squeaked. “But we don’t want to eat here, I just want to order to take with us. I’ve heard your barbecue is the best,” Aunt Gwen smiled back at the teen. He repeated his instructions to go to the back door in a more insistent tone. Aunt Gwen put the station wagon in reverse and slowly backed out of the parking lot. Trying to put the best face on it that she could, she sighed, “I don’t think I could swallow a bite of that barbecue after that anyway.” I felt all hot – embarrassed and ashamed. I didn’t understand why I had those feelings at the time, but I now realize how devastating it was to see an adult that I knew and loved belittled and treated as worthless – and, by extension, all of us in the car.

What is the first thing that you see when a stranger walks into a room? Intelligence? Compassion? Generosity? I first notice all of the identity markers that the Greenhouse Community has explored this year: race, gender, religious affiliation, body type, dis/ability. So I am acutely aware when in a new setting of how I am perceived. A close family member chastens, “Why do you care what others think? That’s their problem.” As a Southern Black woman I was brought up to care about appearances and perceptions in order to exist in a place of peace and harmony for myself and my loved ones. In terms of appearances I am short of stature and have a lighter skin tone, with green/brown eyes and (at one time) very long, very thick, very red hair. Hardly an imposing physical threat, however because of my somewhat unexpected appearance, I am sized up quickly by both Blacks and Whites. “Are you mixed race?” “What are you?” “Eres Dominicana?” “Can I touch your hair?” As time has passed, these assumptions don’t feel quite as intrusive.

I get it that the human brain wants to sort people into categories in order to avoid the dissonance that variety creates. I am constantly working to retrain my brain to push those default categories away, too. But there’s another identity marker to sort by – age – specifically early childhood which in some ways supersedes the others in my brain. I truly see children as just children, not Black children or White children or Brown children. It sounds corny but I do look at them like I look at flowers, each with its own beauty, potential and purpose. Maybe



that's why I became an early childhood teacher; to do what I could to interrupt and dissipate the overt and covert SMOG that divides us.

When I became a parent, I was determined to do what I could to provide Tommy with all of the positive reinforcement that I enjoyed growing up. I also wanted to protect him from the negatives when I could. I bought a book for him about firefighters because his grandfather was a lieutenant in the New York City fire department. To my surprise and frustration all of the firefighters illustrated in the book were White. I took my colored pencils and colored in the characters so that Tommy could see himself. I didn't make all of the firefighters Black, but enough so he could see his reflection and believe that maybe one day he could be a firefighter too. Of course I made the fire chief Black! When Sarah was little I wrote to both Fisher Price and Mattel to complain about racial disparity in their toys. Me speaking incredulously to the clerk in Toys R Us, "You mean that you don't sell the doll house with a Black family?? That I have to buy a Black family separately??" That's Black tax – the extra fee for a seat at the Welcome Table.

Now thankfully there are many more books and toys that reflect diversity for children to enjoy. I even found a book about a Black firefighter: *Molly, by Golly: The Legend of Molly William, America's First Female Firefighter* by Dianne Ochilree, and illustrated by Kathleen Kemly.

Finally, I want to thank the entire Greenhouse community. It has truly been my privilege and pleasure to work with the amazing teachers and staff and the wonderful families.

I leave you with Love. Dolly



Faculty List 2017-2018

2Day 2s	Rachel Roth, Head Teacher
3Day 2s	Indiana Bervis, Assistant Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher
2/3s Aft.	Rachel Roth, Head Teacher Nexhmije Avoricani, Assistant Teacher
Young 3s	Angela Coulibaly, Head Teacher Nina Basescu, Assistant Teacher
Older 3s	Pam Butler, Head Teacher Erica Cintron, Assistant Teacher Kira Rutherford-Boese, Assistant Teacher
3/4s	Paula Doerfel, Head Teacher Tolisa Orr-Chambliss, Assistant Teacher
4/5s	Margaret Williams, Co-Teacher David Vining, Co-Teacher Heather Guerrier, Assistant Teacher
Administrative Staff	Renee Mease, Director Vera Elumn, Administrator Mei Au Yeong, Admin Assistant
Support Staff	Lorraine Harner, Child Psychologist Kira Rutherford-Boese, Music

BEST WISHES TO LORRAINE

Lorraine Harner, our consulting psychologist, announced her departure from Greenhouse at the end of the school year. For over 30 years, Lorraine has been a steadfast fixture at Greenhouse. Her understandings of children, parenting and teaching are found literally in the very fabric of our daily practice. Lorraine brought her warmth, dedication and professional knowledge to every interaction, every family and every child throughout her long career. We are eternally grateful for her work at Greenhouse. We wish her well and know she will fill her days with hugs and kisses from her new baby granddaughter, Theodora!



Building Bridges: Families in the classroom By Pam Butler, Teacher O3s

School is often a child's first consistent experience in a social group that is outside their family. Building a strong bridge between home and school is vital for young children. One way we help build this connection for children is to invite their important grown-ups into our classrooms. Whether it is parents, grandparents, or caregivers. Whether they are reading, cooking, or making music. This time spent together in the classroom has important benefits for children, families and our community.

Seeing your family and important grownups inside the walls of your classroom, sends a clear message to children that their family is valued, welcomed and visible inside school. When families share a special hobby or favorite recipe they are opening up a window into their personal lives and inviting the rest of the class to peek inside. It is in this act of sharing ones full self that you begin to build deep, meaningful and personal connections with others. In these visits, children begin to experience various family structures. Through their experiences, they see that people choose different ways to be a family and that all kinds of families love and take care of each other. In addition to these direct benefits for the children, grown-ups get to experience school and see their "school kid" in action.



“It’s So Nice to Have a *Man* in the Classroom “ By David Vining, Co-Teacher, 4/5s



As a man working in early childhood, I hear that a lot. I have many conflicting feelings about being singled out for something that I cannot do anything about, something that is just a part of me-- my gender. In most of my life as a white male person, I experience a great deal of privilege. I have become more and more aware of it over the last year, and also aware of how important it is to acknowledge my privilege, and where possible begin to use it to influence the conversation around me. In the world of teaching young children, however, I experience what it is to be the minority. A man teaching nursery school. The good thing about this is that it gives me a sense of what that sort of “othering” might feel like. It is fairly mild; I can take it. But I don’t like it. What assumptions are people making when they say this to me? Are they expecting something in particular from me because I am a man? Others seem to be uncomfortable with a man in the classroom at all. It is a strange feeling to have people make so many judgments about me based on nothing more than a chromosome. All this means that I am a fierce defender of every child’s exploration of their own gender identity. For one child this means trying on the dress that looks so swirly and comfortable



on their friend. For another it might mean taking a turn as Spider-Man, not Wonder Woman, no matter how powerful she may be. And when they explore it, it is our job as teachers to counteract any negative messages that come their way. Messages that tell them that boys or girls can’t, even though they are eager to try. Messages that tell them they aren’t allowed because

of who they are. One of the goals of the classroom is to be a safe place to figure out what it means to be you, a place where everyone feels safe to bring their whole self. In early childhood children are at a stage in their development when they are beginning to define themselves. They look for key markers to establish which groups they belong to; and gender is one of the first things they notice. “I am a girl, you are a girl, we are the same. You are a boy, we are different.” As they begin this journey of self-knowledge they receive messages from media and other sources that create a smog of stereotypes and misinformation. The good news is we can help them navigate this by letting them know that “Clothes are for everyone, sports are for everyone,” and most definitely “princesses are for everyone.” It is important for every child to figure out who they are independent of their primary caregivers, and also to learn what it means to be part of a community. For me, these two go hand in hand, and they both begin with a healthy dose of trying things on for size.

As we teachers explored issues of identity this year at Greenhouse, we spent the majority of our time thinking and talking about race, and rightly so. But we also discussed issues of gender, and gender identity, and I have learned that the facts and feelings about gender are even more complex than I had imagined. Early in the year at one of our faculty meetings my colleagues (all women) began to share some of the scenarios they encounter and deal with on a daily basis because they are female. Concerns about safety, constant harassment, not being taken seriously or treated like equals... It humbled me and made me more keenly aware of just how much people are looked at and judged by what others perceive, regardless of how it matches up to what they feel inside.

In addition to our faculty meetings here at Greenhouse, I also attended a professional development workshop led by Jennifer Bryan. Jennifer is a leading expert in the field of gender and sexual identity education. Of the many things I learned that day, the one that sticks out most is that we are all on a journey. There is no real finish line. It is ok not to be finished. It is ok not to know all the answers. But through all that uncomfortable “not-knowing,” she continued, it is vitally important to stay present, to be there for the children, if only to say “that’s a good question.” By responding in an honest, thoughtful way we show them that we are listening, we value their thinking, and that we will be there for them when they discover new things, and when they don’t know the answers too.

The Intersection of Race and Pedagogy

By Chris and Ebone Emdin, parent of Sydney (4/5s)

Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School has sparked something powerful in both our daughter and our family. The approach to instruction employed at the school has helped her grow into a self-aware and confident 5 year old that believes in the magic she holds as a Black girl while she respects and values what her peers who may share a different race or ethnicity also bring to the world. What has been most magical for our family is the school's efforts to address the intersections of race and pedagogy and hold it as a significant component of its approach to progressive education. This has been most vividly expressed over the last year where the efforts to address race have been courageous and transformative.

Over the last year, I have been part of a parent group that has looked at the ways that race and racism play out in the lives of our children and those who teach them. The work of this group has been to reflect on who we are as a community, identify plans of action for our shared work around race moving forward, and identify ways that the larger community at Greenhouse can engage in critical conversations around race. In the group, a safe space has been created and the vulnerability that has been shared and the willingness of our school leader to implement our suggestions has been unparalleled.

The conversations in this safe space have taken on the structure of the cogenerative dialogue- where people with a shared experience meet to discuss the experience or a phenomenon related to it with a goal of cogenerating a plan of action for improving subsequent experiences. This group of four-five rotating members from the parent community and the school leader have constructed plans of action that range from debriefing sessions with the school staff on race to hosting experts in race to speak to the school community.

As our daughter transitions into kindergarten, our family leaves Greenhouse well prepared for the next phase of her education and much more informed about what she needs to be a successful kindergartener. Most importantly, we have had an opportunity to share and learn more about why race is central to all conversations about her education.

One Conversation at a Time By Marissa Zalk, parent of Lucia (2day 2s)

It's hard to read the newspaper these days without coming across a story that highlights the pervasive state of racial injustice across our country. As a white mother raising white children in extremely divisive times, I've felt a growing concern for what messages of bias I may be unconsciously sending to my kids. I've always hoped to model race consciousness and anti-racism as a parent but, like many, I've left race a largely unspoken topic--mostly for fear of saying the wrong thing.

I was able to attend two of the three Raising Race Conscious Children workshops, which were a timely and worthwhile opportunity to examine my own behaviors and begin using a new set of tools to discuss race with my children. The founders of Raising Race Conscious Children, Lori and Sachi, presented us with research that when parents discuss race with children, we instill positive messages about people of all racial backgrounds. As I've often done, though, parents may hesitate to name race because we believe we need to have all the answers. But the process of talking about race entails mistakes, and the alternative--to leave race unspoken, promote color-blindness, and therefore ignore the reality of racism--carries much greater consequences.

After attending the workshops, I've made an effort to name race, and talk about racial differences explicitly with my kids. Approaching this work one conversation at a time, as Lori so aptly taught us,--through 100 one-minute conversations, rather than one, single 100-minute conversation--has made it feel more manageable. It isn't always easy or natural, and I am certainly stumbling along the way, but I continue having the conversations--and I know my children are listening. I believe Lori and Sachi's words can guide us as a Greenhouse community as we navigate this important space: "If we commit to collectively trying to talk about race with young children, we can lean on one another for support as we, together, envision a world where we actively challenge racism each and every day."



Parent Association: A Look Back

Dear Greenhouse Parents,

It is hard to believe that another year at Greenhouse has come to a close! As your PA Chairs, we are filled with gratitude. We are so fortunate to have our children learn and grow with such skilled and inspiring teachers. We appreciate the warm welcome from the caring staff who greet our children at the door each day. And we are so thankful for our steadfast director, Renee Mease, who has gone above and beyond to fulfill the needs and best interests of the entire Greenhouse community.

At Greenhouse, we share a similar view of early childhood, and from there we have formed deep and lasting connections. These connections include the pure and genuine friendships made among our children, the trust and respect that we have for Greenhouse teachers, and the understanding words of support between parents and caregivers. Each year, the PA looks for new ways to nurture these connections through community activities and events.

This year the PA was pleased to bring back the popular **Caregivers Coffee Hour**. Our caregivers enjoyed two mornings in the small yard sharing stories, resources, and laughs over coffee and treats, and in turn we enjoyed showing them how much we appreciate all that they do. Additionally, we added a **Parents Coffee hour** to provide another opportunity for parents to get to know each other during phase-in. We were happy to see how well attended this was; we look forward to hosting both events again in the fall.

In November we sponsored the cocktail reception and a three-part workshop series, **Raising Race Conscious Children**. The workshops complimented a school-wide initiative to bring race and identity to the forefront. Parents took advantage of this time to really get to know each other, and together explored ways of discussing race with their children. We were incredibly moved to see the level of participation and hear from parents who took from it

useful parenting strategies and tools.

The annual PA **Book Fair** held at Book Culture is a Greenhouse favorite. Families filled the bookstore, and children were excited to see their classmates outside of school. Children sat together and with their family members to hear books read aloud by our Class Reps. Families generously gifted books with themes of identity and inclusivity to their classes.

Each year our **Apple Day Bake Sale, Winter Benefit, and Spring Fair** bring the community together in an effort to raise funds to support the school. The PA would like to send a huge thank you to all the staff and parent volunteers who organized, prepared food, donated goods, and worked events. Without you these events would not be possible.

We must highlight the work of our fabulous Class Representatives. This year the PA Class Reps were instrumental in keeping families informed about events and volunteer opportunities. They also arranged numerous playdates and excursions, facilitated class donations for the Benefit, participated at the book fair, organized teachers' gifts, and welcomed new families to Greenhouse. It also is our pleasure to announce in the coming year, Class Reps Susannah Gold and Lauren Weigel will join the PA Leadership team!

With each year, there comes bittersweet goodbyes. This year we bid farewell to Sharmilee Ramudit who has been a valued member of PA Leadership for the past 2 years in addition to serving as Class Rep. The PA wishes a bright and happy future to her and her wonderful family.

Have a safe and happy summer,
Lydia & Sharmilee



Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the many parent volunteers who took on leadership roles in this year's activities. Your willingness to serve reflects the generosity, spirit and commitment of the Greenhouse community.

PA LEADERSHIP

Lydia Barker, Co-Chair
Sharmilee Ramudit, Co-Chair
Ghazal Badiozamani and Ilya Beylin,
Class Rep
Jennifer Ferguson, Class Rep
Susannah Gold, Class Rep
Lauren Gerber Lee, Class Rep
Kathleen Brennan and Jeff Kearney, Class
Rep
Tessa Scripps, Class Rep
Lauren Weigel, Class Rep
Spring Fair Committee
Lindsay and Mike Pitzer, Co-Chair
Whitney Frick and Andrew Bernstein, Co-
Chair
Christina Weyl, Food Co-Chair
Erika Feldman, Food Co-Chair
Monica Shaw, Rummage Chair

Seulgey Suh, Games Chair
Alastair McKibbon, Set-up/Clean-up Chair
Flori Pressman, Central Booth Chair

Auction Committee

Vera Elumn, Greenhouse Coordinator
Ebony Brown-Emdin, Chair
Yohei and Mayuko Kajiya
Lauren and Baxter Wasson
Elaine Harley and Mignon Moore
Hendrik Richert and Emilie Wang
Michelle Lerner and Robert Carlson
Joanna Mork
Zeynep and Thomas Schoenwaelder
John and Katie Cooper
Christopher Gruszczynski
Ted Lasala
Michael And Margo Fleming
Ghazal Badiozamani and Ilya Beylin

Jennifer and Steve Ferguson
Jen and Jono Hustis
Aline Costa And Jerome Mellon
Nancy Ramsey

Auctioneer

Jono Hustis

Apple Day Bake Sale

Julie Myers
Jo Christine Miles

Event Photographer

Zifeng Yuan
Teresa Riveria-Zenkus
Jane White

Have Tools Will Travel

Jared Fox
Thai Jones and Logan McBride

THE VIBRANT AND GENEROUS GREENHOUSE COMMUNITY

The sun was shining and the street was filled with Greenhouse Fair T-shirts! The Spring Fair is an important tradition at Greenhouse. The old-standbys—bouncy rides, fishing ponds, and ponies—combined with some new additions like our Greenhouse photo booth and a lively Center Stage to create life-long memories for the kids. From the food table to the rummage table, kids and adults alike were participating in the fun!



The Annual Winter Benefit, held at Union Theological Seminary, is a night for the grown-ups of Greenhouse to get dressed up, connect and support the work of the school. Deep gratitude for the communities generosity, good spirits, enthusiastic participation and kindness; the evening was both a great fundraiser and great fun! We also honored two of our beloved faculty members, Angela Coulibaly and Paula Doerfel, for their 25 years of teaching at Greenhouse.





Apple Day Bake Sale



Greenhouse parents are a vital and active group! We strive for a strong sense of community among the classrooms and throughout the entire school.



Parent and

Caregiver Coffee Hours



School wide picnics in the park



New Families "Getting Acquainted" Reception



Parent Workshops



Class Outings

2017-2018 Annual Fund Contributors

The generosity of Greenhouse parents, alumni families, and friends allows us to continue to provide exceptional programs and quality experiences for our children. Their contributions to Greenhouse serve as the catalyst for change and growth, which enables us to continue to refine and enhance the experience that is Greenhouse. Contributions throughout the year to our Annual Fund are the cornerstone of giving to Greenhouse and support the ongoing operational expenses of the school. *Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School thanks and acknowledges the generous contributions of the following individuals and companies:*

Anonymous	Carl S. Kaplan & Pamela Mendels *	Thomas & Zeynep Schoenwaelder
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Susannah Gold	Warren Scharf	
Toby Golick		
Wanda M. Holland Greene		
Lydia Barker & Chris Gruszczynski		
Lorraine Harner		
John Healy and Jessica Grant		
Michael & Kristine Johannes		
Hannah Johnston & R. Andrew Johnston		



