

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Audrey Duck asks, "Why are people protesting?"

DEY Encourages Adults to Talk with Children About George Floyd's Death, Racism and the Protests to Stop It

BOSTON, June 22, 2020 – With the U.S. and the world entering a fourth week of protests around racial injustice in response to the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police, leading child advocacy group, [Defending the Early Years \(DEY\)](#), is encouraging teachers and parents to talk with their children to help them understand the issues and emotions around the uprising.

A [new video](#) by author, psychologist, and award-winning ventriloquist, [Susan Linn, Ed.D.](#), Brookline, Mass., features Linn and her puppet, Audrey Duck talking candidly with Defending the Early Years co-director, [Denisha Jones, Ph.D., J.D.](#), White Plains, New York, about racism and the importance of protesting to end it, the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers, and ways to process the fear, anger and sadness they are feeling.



"We know that young children have the capacity to understand

race and racism and that we must capitalize on their ingrained sense of fairness and justice to help them become anti-racist," said Jones. "These conversations may be tough and cause discomfort, but we cannot expect to be comfortable fighting racism. To be anti-racist is to face the discomfort, sit with it, and allow it to guide our thoughts and actions as we strive to dismantle systems of oppression."

"Silence speaks volumes to young children, and often teaches the wrong lesson," said Dr. Linn, National Advisory Board member for Defending the Early Years. "We encourage teachers and parents to talk with them about racism, the recent tragic events, and the importance of speaking out against—and protesting—injustice."

In a [statement](#) released on June 1, DEY decries the continued assault on Black lives. "As we support those most affected by anti-Black racism, our first thoughts are always to protect children. A just and equitable early childhood education for Black children means valuing and affirming that their lives matter," said Nancy Carlsson-Paige, co-founder and senior advisor of Defending the Early Years. "We proudly say #BlackLivesMatter and stand in solidarity with all Black children and their families for a future that does not include and will not abide racism."

DEY recommends additional resources including [Guidelines for Talking with Children](#) about George Floyd's death and the recent uprisings, and a powerful new web portal, [Talking About Race](#), that is available via Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

DEY and Dr. Linn, have produced three videos featuring Audrey Duck. "[Why are people protesting?," "I'm Tired of the Virus!"](#) and "[Who is 'Corona Virus'?](#)" can serve as a springboard for discussion about things that can be hard for families to talk about.

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Susan Linn, Ed.D.

Susan Linn is a world-renowned expert on creative play and the impact of media and commercial marketing on children. An award-winning ventriloquist and children's entertainer, Dr. Linn appeared on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and is internationally known for her innovative work using puppets in child psychotherapy. Dr. Linn has written and appeared in a number of video programs designed to help children cope with issues ranging from mental illness to death and loss. *This Secret Should Be Told*, a program for children about sexual abuse that aired on WBZ-TV (Boston's CBS affiliate) won a coveted ACT award and earned Dr. Linn a New England Emmy Award. With Fred Rogers' production company, she created the acclaimed educational video series *Different and the Same: Helping Children Identify and Prevent Prejudice*. This collection of nine videos, along with a teacher's guide and training tape, is being used in classrooms across the world.

Denisha Jones, Ph.D., J.D.

Denisha Jones is co-director Defending the Early Years and director of the Art of Teaching Program at Sarah Lawrence College. She has a B.S. in Early Childhood Education and Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership from the University of the District of Columbia; a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana University and a J.D. from the University of the District of Columbia. Previously, Jones worked at Trinity Washington University, first in the College of Arts and Sciences as assistant professor and program chair for undergraduate elementary and early childhood programs and, most recently, in the School of Education as director of teacher education and assistant professor. She has also served as a lecturer and faculty member at Howard University and Grossmont College; preschool director and faculty member at Mira Costa College; associate instructor/university supervisor/field experience supervisor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Indiana University Bloomington and Kindergarten teacher at the Peabody Early Childhood Learning Center.

About Defending the Early Years

Defending the Early Years (DEY) is a nonprofit organization advocating for developmentally appropriate learning in early childhood and elementary school years. Founded by respected experts in early childhood education, Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Ed.D. and Diane Levin, Ph.D., and steered by a National Advisory Board, DEY aims to educate parents, teachers and administrators on the evidence-based approaches to how young children learn best; to embolden a return to a model of active, play-based and experiential learning and ongoing observations and formative assessments over time; and to make these opportunities available to every young child. For information, visit [dey.org](#), Facebook: [@DefendingtheEarlyYears](#), Twitter: [@DEY_Project](#), and [YouTube](#).

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