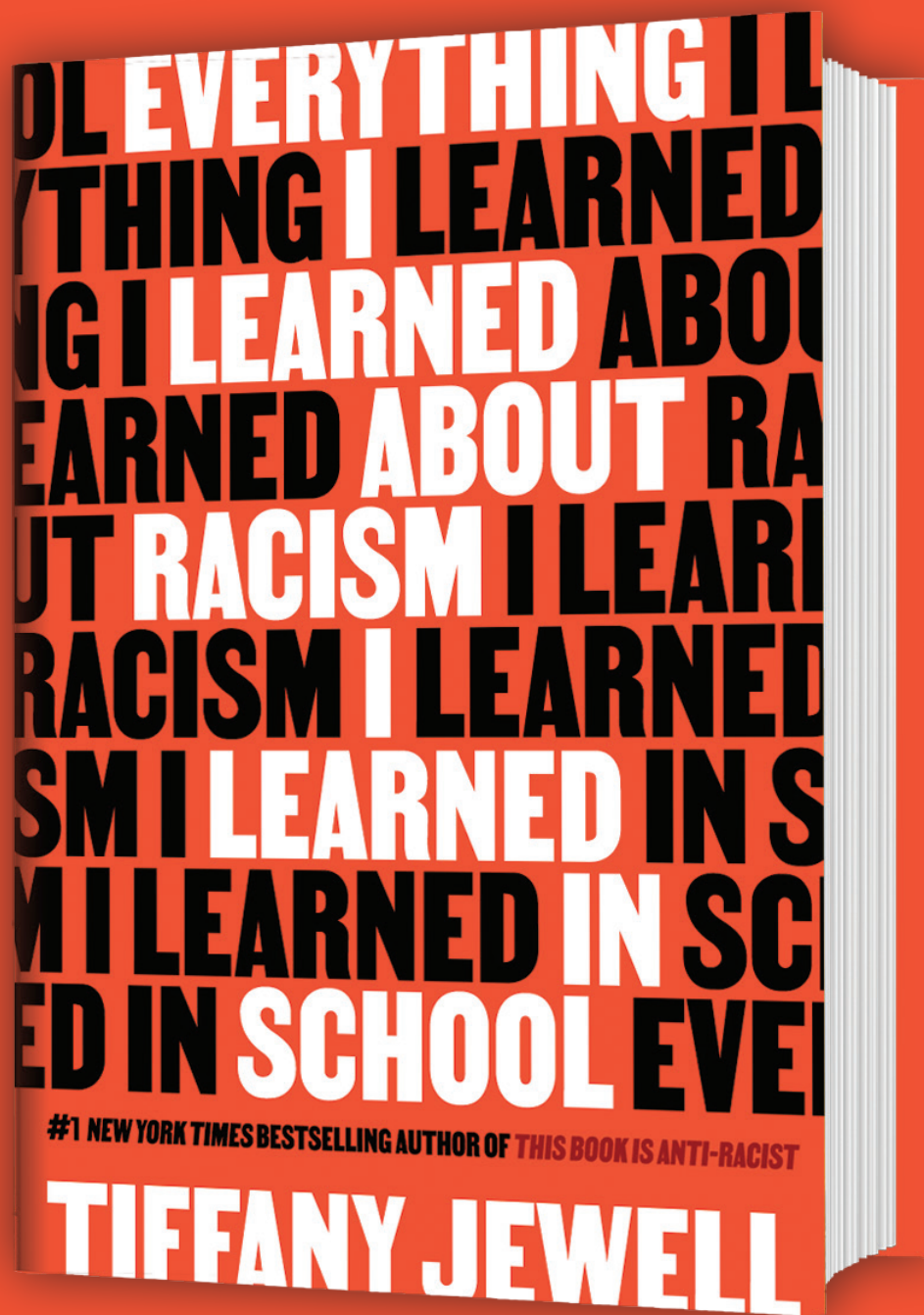


# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



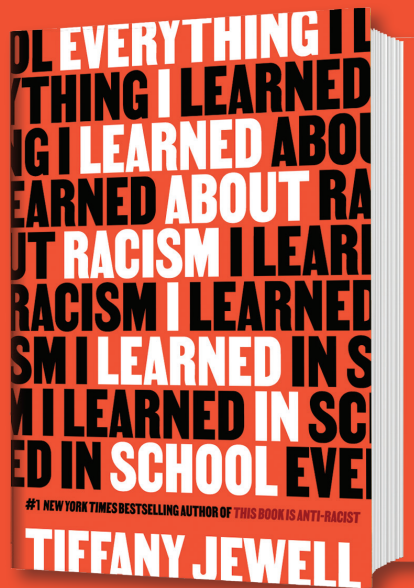
A groundbreaking, empowering work of nonfiction.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**TIFFANY JEWELL** is a Black biracial writer, twin sister, first-generation American, cisgender mama, and anti-bias antiracist educator. She is the author of the #1 *New York Times* and #1 Indie bestseller *This Book Is Anti-Racist*. Tiffany lives on the homeland of the Pocumtuc, Nipmuck, and Nonotuck with her two young storytellers, her husband, a turtle she's had since she was nine years old, and a small dog with a big personality.

*Author photo by Phyllis Meredith.*



## ABOUT THE BOOK

This is more than just another nonfiction book about race. *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* is an invitation for youth (and adults alike) to grapple with the injustice that pervades their daily experiences of schooling. In this beautifully quilted memoir, Tiffany Jewell weaves compelling, heart-wrenching narratives with necessary definitions and histories of schooling to provide youth with a multifaceted critique of racism and injustice in society. With contributions from 19 additional authors, Jewell provides readers and teachers alike with a nuanced resource that offers a more critical approach to exploring how racism impacts youth daily in schools. Stretching from grade school to college, *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* invites all of us to make connections to our own experiences and schooling, ask tough questions, and take action. Whether you read it cover-to-cover or use excerpts to engage in reflection and discussion, *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* reminds us all of the power of speaking our truths aloud, and dreaming beyond what exists.

### CONTRIBUTOR ESSAYS

“Amelia’s Story” by Amelia A. Sherwood

“Other” by Randy Ribay

“Rebekah’s Story” by Rebekah Borucki

“The Discipline Problem” and “Together, Everyone Achieves More” by Roberto Germán

“Self(less) Portrait: A Kind of One-Act Play” by Minh Lê

“Emmanuel’s Story” by Emmanuel

“What I’ve Learned About Racism” by James Bird

“What I Remember (Part One)” and “What I Remember (Part Two)” by Lorena Germán

“Liz’s Story” by Liz Sohyeon Kleinrock

“Stains We Can’t Ignore” by Gary R. Gray Jr.

“August’s Story” by August

“The Othering” by Patrick Harris II

“The Fat Black Kid Who Flew” by shea wesley martin

“David’s Letter” by David Ryan Barcega Castro-Harris

“Torrey’s Story” by Torrey Maldonado

“Ozy’s Story” and “Ozy’s Letter” by Ozy Aloziem

“Notes on Schooling” by Gayatri Sethi

“The Story of Doña Ana, Doña Dulce María, and Dulce-Marie” by Dulce-Marie Flecha

“School Is the World” by Joanna Ho

# INTRODUCTION TO *EVERYTHING I LEARNED ABOUT RACISM* *I LEARNED IN SCHOOL* BY TIFFANY JEWELL

I have always loved learning. I think that's why I liked school so much.

I liked having a place to go each day where I could be with friends. I liked the structure and routine. (I was a morning person!) I liked (and still do like) being challenged and having time and space to problem-solve.

I learned how to read in school. I remember our yellow phonics workbooks so clearly. I learned about the water cycle and recycling. I learned about the Hellenistic period and Gutenberg's printing press. I learned that a logarithm is an exponent. I learned a lot of things—and there was a lot that was missing.

For a while, I passively accepted things I learned in school as truth. I believed the stories we were taught. And what we read in the textbooks confirmed all we were told. I didn't seek information beyond the textbooks. For a while, I passively accepted all the things I learned in school. And then I started noticing.

I noticed a lot of things.

This book is about some of the things I noticed and how those things made school uncomfortable, unsafe, unfair, and unjust. It's part memoir, part anthology, part history, part social commentary, and part something else.

This book is mostly my school story.

I am a light-skinned Black biracial cisgender female who grew up in a midsize city in New York State. I do not have any disabilities, and English is my home language. I grew up in a racially expansive neighborhood of working-class poor folks. I lived with my mom and my twin sister in homes where there was heat and food. I attended our neighborhood public schools from preschool through high school. I'm a first-generation college graduate. I went to one private liberal arts college and then transferred to another.

This book is my journey through the public-school system. It includes some of my memories and some research, some facts, and some information. This book is me trying to make sense of the time I spent in school, from my first days of preschool through my college graduation.

This book is my coming to terms with the fact that just about everything I learned about racism, I learned in school.

This book is some of your school story too. It holds parts of our collective story of schooling in America.

So many of us have had similar experiences even though we were born in different decades, in different cities and towns, and to different families. Our school systems, whether public or private, traditional or alternative, are places where some of us experience racism and injustice and are witness to it daily.

This book also holds some stories from some of my friends, people I admire, and folks who write and share honestly. I asked them to write parts of their stories here because my words need not be the only ones. They can't be. I am not the only person who can tell this story.

I'm hoping you will write the next chapters, because this story isn't over. I hope you will be able to share your stories just like I am sharing some of mine.

This book is a reflection.

It is an exploration.

It's my truth and some of our shared truth.

It's a collection of small histories and stories.

This book is an unpacking and a processing and a trying to make sense of the world.

## TIPS FOR HOW TO USE THIS BOOK FOR EDUCATORS

*Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* is a collection of personal reflections, dreams, and histories that invite dynamic, critical engagement with our own schooling experiences. Jewell's pairing of her memoir with stories from others, history, and schooling data presents a multifaceted, community-grounded resource with multiple points of entry and engagement. Consider the suggestions below as you prepare to use this book with learners.

### BEFORE YOU TEACH—DO YOUR OWN WORK.

As you prepare to read and/or teach this book with students, it is essential to engage with it on your own. As you read, pause and reflect on your own schooling journey, understanding of racism and systemic oppression, and engagement in racism systems. While reading, take note of how your own experiences might impact how you present this to learners and consider the following questions.

- What did schooling teach you about racism as a kid? As an adult?
- How do your beliefs, interactions, and/or pedagogy disrupt or codify racism in schooling today?
- What learning do you still need to do before introducing this book to youth? What learning might you want to do alongside youth?
- What support do you need to engage learners with this book intentionally and responsibly? What resources might you leverage in your own community to do so?

### THIS BOOK REMINDS US THERE IS POWER IN YOUTH VOICES AND STORIES.

On every page of *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned In School*, youth voices and experiences are presented as valid, important, and powerful. Whether it is Jewell's weaving her memories of grade school with understandings of class and race or snapshots of contributors' experiences in schools, the stories emphasize the necessity of reminding young learners that their truths matter.

### DON'T FORGET TO TAKE CARE.

This book does not shy away from the tough stuff. This book includes mentions of violence, suicide, racial epithets, poverty, and drugs. Jewell and her community of contributors write about experiences that are unfair, unjust, and hurtful. Thus, establishing community practices of care, joy, and affirmation is essential while reading and discussing this book with learners. Go outside, have a dance party, take breaks, and most importantly—remind learners they are worthy of the best things in this world and beyond.

### ENGAGE WITH INTENTIONALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION.

*Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* rejects a monolithic understanding or definition of what it means to learn about racism in school; instead, it is a community project featuring so many voices, perspectives, and experiences of racism, schooling, and growing up. This diversity is intentional. It also serves to remind educators of the diversity of learners' experiences and understandings. As you prepare to engage learners, consider doing so intentionally with youths' identities, experiences, and learning needs in mind. Consider the following prompts as you plan to engage learners in reading the book.

- What are the racial demographics of the learners who will engage with this text?
- How might their experiences impact their engagement?
- How might their other intersecting identities impact their engagement?
- How might you holistically support your students of the global majority as they read this text?

**NOTE: No matter what, learners' race and/or ethnicity will impact their engagement with this book. It always impacts how they show up in the world and how the world sees them (even if they don't realize it). Thus, you will need to be mindful of this (but not presumptive).**

- **Are you reading this book in a predominantly white learning community with just a few learners of the global majority? Consider creating an affinity space for learners of the global majority.**
  - This space should always be offered and optional, allowing for discussion of experiences without forcing learners to educate or be harmed by white peer/adult learning.
  - Having an adult facilitator who is also a person of the global majority to facilitate this space would be optimal.
- **Are you reading this book in a homogenous white learning community?**
  - Remind learners that this book is about the impacts of systemic oppression and racism on all kids, but especially kids of the global majority.
  - Consider having learners keep a feelings-and-questions journal as they read where they track their responses to reading. Encourage them to interrogate the reasons behind their feelings.
  - Ensure learners do not generalize the experiences of any one racial or ethnic group. Help them understand the diversity of experiences in schooling (including their own).
- **Are you a white educator reading this book in a community full of learners of the global majority? Listen, learn, collaborate, and elevate.**
  - Listen to your students—not only their reflections on the text but also about their own experiences in school. Believe them.
  - Intentionally prepare lessons with the text while also leaving space for learners to drive their own engagement. Don't rely on the book to teach itself. Pair it with other texts, incorporate it into the existing curriculum, and circle back to stories and lessons.
  - Collaborate with community members. As a white educator, own your role in what exists in schools and invite other voices into the conversation.
- **Are you a caregiver reading this book with your children? Make sure to prioritize children's voices and learning while reading.**
  - Honor and listen to your children's stories.
  - Share your own story and make connections back to your children's experiences.
  - Collaborate with your child in action plans, research projects, and community experiences to extend this text.

## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO READ THIS IN COMMUNITY.**

Introducing this book in schools and libraries in this sociopolitical climate might seem incredibly daunting and scary given the rise in censorship, laws, and book challenges across the United States. When preparing to teach or read *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* with learners, invite caregivers, colleagues, and families to read alongside you. Consider establishing a caregiver or community reading group that extends the book beyond your classroom walls. If you receive pushback or challenges, consult the following resources for support:

- **Resources from the National Coalition Against Censorship**
  - Book Censorship Action Kit
  - Responding to Book Challenges: A Handbook for Educators
- **Resources from the National Council of Teachers of English**
  - Position Statement: Guidelines for Dealing with Censorship of Instructional Materials
  - Book Rationale Database

# PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

## INDIVIDUAL/GROUP ACTIVITY: ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY NORMS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Before reading, consider establishing (or re-establishing) your community norms in your learning space. Invite students to independently reflect and journal in response to the following prompts. Afterward, allow them to share in a low-stakes mode that does not necessarily require them to personally identify with their ideas (e.g., Jamboard, Post-its on the board, Padlet). This allows the community to discuss the ideas without attaching them to a specific person. As you discuss the norms, encourage students to notice themes or trends in the responses. Use these themes to create a set of norms that will guide engagement in the learning space. Note: Whenever you enter the space, it is always a good idea to regroup learners (and yourself) in the community norms for engagement.

- What do you need to feel safe, included, and affirmed in this space?
- What do we need in this space to make it suitable for our learning needs and preferences?
- What does community mean to you? What does it look, sound, and feel like?
- How should we address conflict and harm in this space?
- **For more information on establishing community norms, check out these resources:**
  - Who Cares About Classroom Norms?: Human Needs and Community Healing (Rethinking Schools)
  - Building Collaborative Classroom Norms (Greater Good in Education)

## INDIVIDUAL CREATIVE ACTIVITY: REFLECTION JOURNALS

Encourage students to keep journals to write down their personal reflections and own stories while reading. Before reading, build on the idea of diversity of experiences prominent in *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School* by engaging students in a journal cover collaging activity. Using magazines, old books, art supplies, or digital tools, have students decorate the cover of their journals with the theme “This Is My Story.” When done, consider inviting students to share their journal covers and the stories behind their art with one another.

## GROUP ACTIVITY: DEVELOP A WALL OF WONDERINGS

Ask students how they might want to collectively track their questions and “aha!” moments while reading *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*. Together as a class, develop a “Wall of Wonderings” (think: a chart paper parking lot or Jamboard) where students might leave burning questions, learnings, or connections. This wall can be used throughout your engagement with the text and encourages collaborative analysis and thinking.

## INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION: SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL AND REFLECTION

Before engaging with this text, encourage students to reflect on how their own identities impact how they show up in schools, their own neighborhoods, and at home. Consider using the Social Identity Wheel worksheet to frame this activity along with the following reflection prompts.

- How do your identities impact how you engage with others?
- How often do you see your identities represented in school? Is that representation positive or negative? How does this make you feel?
- How often do you see your identities represented on the news or in the media? Is that representation positive or negative? How does this make you feel?
- What have you learned about your identities from your experiences, schooling, and interactions with others? How might that shape how you engage with *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In “What I Learned About My Label,” Jewell writes about how labels impacted the opportunities and treatment she received at school. What labels have you or others been given in your own school experience? What are the impacts of those labels on how you see yourself and others?
2. In “What Racism Is,” Jewell introduces us to the phrase “People of the Global Majority” (p. 23). How does this term reframe your understanding of minority and majority representation? How is it different or similar to what you’ve been taught before?
3. In “Other” by Randy, he repeats the phrase he heard while growing up: “What are you?” How does his use of repetition help you understand the impact of this question on Randy’s life as a kid? What other questions might we use to get to know more about others’ backgrounds, histories, and interests?
4. When writing about her experiences as a five-year-old girl, Rebekah explains, “Boxes. That’s when my education about boxes started, when I realized that nuance and overlap and complex definitions weren’t a thing—for my classmates, or my teachers, or the world in which I found myself confined” (p. 21). What education have you received about boxes? What do boxes achieve?
5. What are the stories that you’ve learned about segregation and integration? How does Jewell’s discussion about magnet schools, integration, and busing shift your understanding?
6. After reading “The Discipline Problem” and Roberto’s reflection, think about your rules in your own school. Do those rules honor what students might be struggling with outside of school? Why or why not?
7. In “What I Learned About Tracking,” Jewell uses a Choose-Your-Own Adventure style of narrative. How does this style help you differentiate the impacts of different learning environments and expectations on students’ experiences in schools? Do you think it is fair or just for students to have different experiences like these? Why or why not?
8. Lorena writes about all of the moments she wishes she could forget. What do these memories reveal about the beliefs, assumptions, and policies that guided her schooling experience?
9. August writes, “I sometimes wondered if telling the truth was worth it if I was always going to have to do extra to explain myself” (p. 108). What advice might you give August given his experiences and your own understanding and knowledge of how systems work as a young person?
10. What has school taught you about competition and success? How does that impact how you show up in your classes and extracurricular activities? How does it impact how you feel about yourself and others?
11. Consider Jewell’s lesson about military recruitment, opting out, and the targeting of certain populations. Do you think it is fair for students to have their information given to others without their consent? What are the experiences you have been told to do without reasonable explanation?
12. shea writes about music being their escape from the everyday tasks of school and expectations. What are the activities, people, or places that allow you to “fly” in your own schooling experience?
13. After reading “What I Learned About Students’ Rights,” which of the rights feels most important to you as a student? Why? Have you seen evidence of your school supporting and/or violating this right in your school?
14. What are all the ways that Gayatri describes schooling? Which ways resonate with you? What are the differences between schooling and learning?
15. In “What I Learned During My Freshman Year,” the author writes about finding her people in high school. Who are the people or places that make you feel safe in and out of school?
16. Who and what did the author choose to center in this book? What impact does that have on the histories we learned and might consider in the future?



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### DIGGING DEEP: A RESEARCH EXTENSION

Select several key events, people, or laws discussed in *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*. Working in pairs, small groups, or as individuals, have students choose a topic from your curated list to learn more about. Invite students to create a mind-map, collage, or presentation that provides more information about the topic. Encourage them to explore what their research teaches them about racism, injustice, community, or resistance movements. When students are done, allow them to present the information to peers in a way that feels important to them.

### DO SOMETHING: YOUTH-DRIVEN ACTION PROJECTS

As students read *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*, encourage them to make connections to their own experiences in schools and communities. After reading, collectively interrogate your own school policies or community needs. Ask students what they are most passionate about addressing. Place them in groups of 3 to 4 and provide them with time, resources, and support as they engage in action projects to address their selected issue. Encourage students to research and partner with existing community organizations on their work. Throughout the process, make space for students to share their learning, questions, and progress.

### SPEAK UP: A STORY SHOWCASE

Throughout *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*, contributors share their own stories in a variety of genres. Some stories are told in verse, others are essays. Some sections even read more like a detailed textbook with personal anecdotes, history, and data. No matter what, each section conveys the respective authors' personal experiences and truths. As an extension, invite students (and family members) to write, edit, revise, and publish their own stories in a community collection of stories regarding race, racism, and injustice in their own communities. When done, consider hosting a showcase where community members can read, perform, and share their experiences aloud.

### WHAT IF?: FREEDOM-DREAMING OF WHAT SCHOOLS CAN BE

In the last section of *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*, Tiffany Jewell compels young readers to “create a vision for the future!” (p. 224). Using the prompts in the book’s final section (p. 223), lead students in a collaborative freedom-dreaming session where they imagine, discuss, and create mind-maps, poems, images, or songs about what they think schools should be. When done, encourage students to share their dreams loudly and proudly with each other.

Guide created by shea wesley martin, a literacy scholar-educator based in the Midwest.