

Committed Collective Action: *The Journey Continues...*

By Donna Kennebeck, Iowa AEYC High Performing Inclusive Organization (HPIO) Chair

Let's take pause to reflect on the past few weeks:

- Pandemic numbers are skyrocketing
- We experienced our first Derecho
- School is on, off, part time, virtual, face to face,
- Protests in Wisconsin

Life has been unpredictable and very scary of late.

This is where we in early childhood dig down deep and continue to do what we do best; support young children, their families, and each other. Thank you for all that you do and being You!

Let's continue to learn together to "know better and do better".

Face Test: in my last article, I encouraged you to do the "Face Test." Participants answered a series of questions about diversity and placed features on a blank face. A comparison was done between the individual's childhood face and adulthood face.

Face Test: My "childhood" face was just about empty. Except for a couple of years early on, my world was very "white" growing up. Most of my exposures to diversity were from television. My adult face was better, but still not a full face.

How do I think this has shaped how I view others? On a conscious basis, I am aware that prejudice and racism are morally wrong. Yet there are times in my past that I would have laugh at inappropriate jokes or listen to others' demonstrating their belief in stereotypes My silence just contributes to the stereotype continuing. I remember riding with friends and someone said, "I get the front, you're riding nig." At the time, I actually thought it just meant riding alone in the back. — *I know pretty naïve.* So many times, I think people use phrases they have heard without really understanding where it came from.

One of the strategies I have been embracing as I move along on this journey is putting myself in new situations that provide me with experiences that broaden my understanding. One of the

experiences that I enjoyed with my daughter and grandchildren was walking in the Pride Parade.

Let's learn a bit about Microaggressions:

Microaggressions are brief, every day, verbal, behavioral, and environmental exchanges, both unintentional and intentional, that send disparaging messages to individuals based on their group membership. Microaggressions can have a serious impact and should not be dismissed because of their brief or often unintentional nature. Researchers have linked continuous exposure of microaggressions to depression, anxiety related symptoms, diminished psychological well-being and physical health.

Behavioral examples of microaggressions and possible hidden meanings are:

- A white person grabs their purse or wallet as an African American or Latino approaches (Assumption of criminality)
- A white individual waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it (Assumption of criminality)
- Mistaking a person of color as a service worker (treating someone as a second class citizen)

Verbal examples and possible hidden meanings are:

- “You are so articulate.” (Believing people of color are less intelligent than whites)
- “I don’t see color” (I don’t want to acknowledge race)
- “You speak great English.” (Assuming someone is foreign born)
- “I’m not racist. I have several black friends.” (Denial of individual racism—because I have friends of color I can’t be racist”)

{Taken from the *Courageous Conversations Toolkit*}

Well, I don’t know about you, but I have been guilty of microaggressions and I have experienced microaggressions. Think about your life. Have you experienced them? How did you feel? Take some time to reflect. Do you think the recipients of microaggressions should “get over it”? Whose responsibility is it?

I am including a link to an activity that can be done individually or as a group as we work towards understanding microaggressions and their affects. I invite you to do the activity and send me your thoughts around microaggressions. [Click here](#)

Any comments, reflections, suggestions, resources, please feel free to reach out.

dnnsmlyk@aol.com