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'PBS Kids Talk About: Race and Racism' host Amanda Gorman has a piece of advice for adults

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PBS Kids is joining the conversation about a timely and important topic with "[PBS Kids Talk About: Race and Racism](#)," a half-hour special airing Friday (7 EDT/PDT; check local listings).

"[PBS Kids Talk About](#)," formerly a digital series, features families conversing about subjects like courage, self-confidence, feelings and emotions and relationships and family. Black writer-activist Amanda Gorman, who at 19 was named America's first National Youth Poet Laureate in 2017, serves as host. The new TV special features clips from [PBS](#) series including "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" and "Arthur."

Gorman hopes viewers absorb the importance of conversations about racism. "We

can't end it unless we have a dialogue about it, and that can't be a one-time conversation," she says. "It has to be continuous and interwoven in our lives and the ways in which we communicate with our children. And that conversation doesn't always have to be daunting. It can have its own fun, its own light, its own joy and love that's brought forth by families.



Lesli Rotenberg, PBS Kids' programming chef, is "thrilled" to have the Los Angeles native, now 22, participate.

"Parents have increasingly asked us for resources to address tough but important topics with their kids in an age-appropriate way, including race and racism," Rotenberg says in a statement. "This special is designed for parents and children to watch together, and for parents to build on (it) in whatever way they choose to have these conversations with their children."

Gorman recalls discussions about race as a youth that readied her for injustices.

"My experience as a Black child growing up meant that I was getting the race talk, not only as information but as a cautionary tale, meaning that my mom was preparing me for what it would be like to grow up and be in this skin," she says. "That meant making sure I knew my Miranda rights, what to do if I was stopped by police, how to conduct myself around white people in power."

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She recommends those looking to engage children in conversations about race and racism not to underestimate their audience.

"One piece of advice I would have is we often don't give kids enough credit for their intelligence, particularly their emotional and moral intelligence," she says. "We assume that issues can be too big or too complex for them. So what ends up happening is we end up glossing over what makes those topics sophisticated."

"The children of today are ready to have deeper conversations that supersede just talking about Rosa Parks and Jackie Robinson," she adds. "Not to say that those figures aren't important, but there's such a beautiful rich tapestry of the history of fighting for racial equality, and it's a story that... our children deserve to be told."

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Gorman emphasizes the common thread of humankind, despite physical and cultural differences.

"To put this so simply: Racism is real, but race is not, in the way we've constructed it, meaning that I hope that when families watch this they don't leave with a sensation that Black people are drastically different from white people," she says.

"I want them to understand that, yes, skin differences, hair differences, language differences, those do exist. But when we boil it down, we are all part of only one race, which is the human race. We have to remember that when we talk about racism, because that underscores how incorrect it is, that it's trying to draw lines between us when we're really part of the same family."

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/09/pbs-kids-talk-about-race-and-racism-amanda-gorman/5915727002/>