

“My Dream” (p. ix)

- What feelings came up for you as you read Akilah's "My Dream"?
- Which of these subjects were you aware of in fourth grade?
- Were you surprised that a fourth grader would have to think about any of these?
- What would you tell her if you could?

Introduction (p. xi)

- Have you ever been in an environment where you were the minority in any way or just felt different from everyone else?
- If so, did you feel safe and/or welcomed? Did you feel like you needed to hide your difference?
- At times, many of us notice people who do not have the same opportunities as we do. What does it feel like to you when you notice these people?
- What things do you think of as normal or take for granted, such as the ability to go to the store for groceries, a safe place to live, or hot water?
- Do you think there are people for whom those are luxuries?
- What do you believe that others have that you do not?

Chapter 1 (p. 1)

- Do you think most professionals are required to spend their take-home pay on work items? What items are these?
- Do you believe teachers are expected to spend money?
- How do you feel about the idea that the author spent so much of her money for these children, and on these items?
- If you disagree with this decision, what do you think she should have done? If you were in that position, what do you think you would have done? Have you ever donated something to a classroom teacher? If so, what was it and what impact do you think it had on the students? If not, what talents, skills, or materials would you consider donating to a local classroom?
- Have you or your children needed special help from a teacher in order to function well in the classroom? What kind of help did you get?

Chapter 2 (p. 11)

- Regarding the ChildTrauma Academy statistic on pg 13, what ideas do you have (given limited resources) for how teachers can address trauma, while still meeting students' academic needs?
- What was your impression of police officers when you were young? How does that compare with the views of the students in the book?
- Did you feel safe in elementary school?
- If not, what needed to be done?
- If so, how do you think you would have reacted to lockdowns or other reasons to feel unsafe?

Chapter 3 (p. 21)

- Have you ever had a boss that sounded like any of the principals in East Oakland Elementary? How did that affect your work and everyday life?
- Do you think there is any difference in managing teachers and managing people working in a business?
- If East Oakland Elementary had had a stable, effective principal, how might that have changed things?
- Page 32 describes how the federal government was putting sanctions on teachers at underperforming schools, which began a vicious circle since the school then had fewer resources with which to improve. Yet the same administration claimed that it was unfair to penalize itself in regards to progress in Iraq. Do you feel that this is inconsistent? How could the performance of teachers and schools be measured?

Chapter 4 (p. 35)

- Which subjects in school were the ones that grabbed your attention and made you want to go to school? If there weren't any, what would have done that for you?
- What do you think are the value of field trips at school? Did you have any memorable ones as a child?
- Have you ever chaperoned or helped at a field trip? If so, was there anything surprising to you as an adult?
- Do you think standardized tests accurately measure a student's achievement? What, if anything, would you change about them?

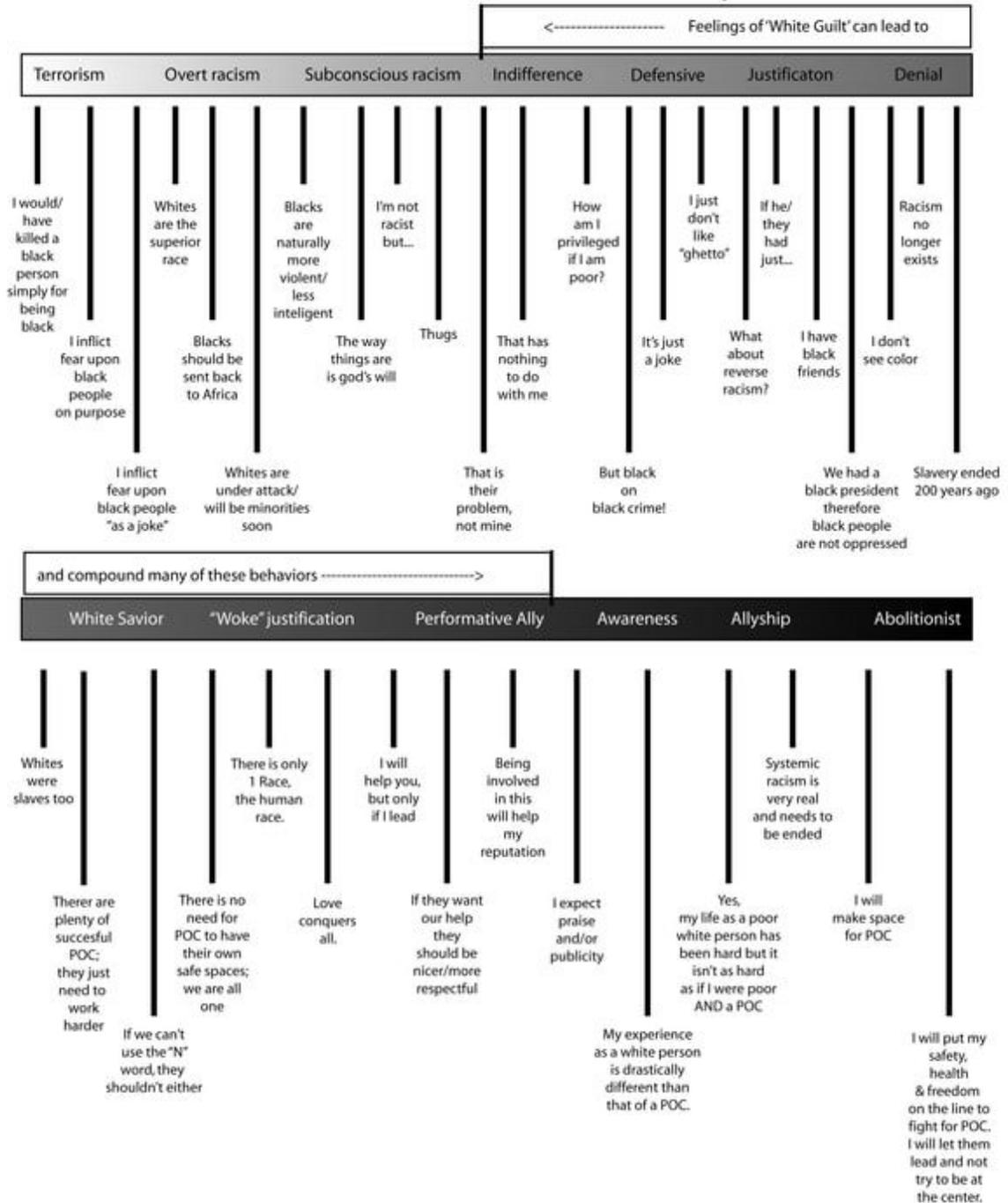
Chapter 5 (p. 47)

- Do you remember feeling respected by your teachers? Which ones stand out and how did their respect or lack of respect make you feel?
- What do you think motivated DaShon to act differently for each teacher?
- Why did parents have preconceived notions of white teachers?
- What did the author do to let the families know she cared and was invested? Have you ever had to go above and beyond to show someone you cared about them?
- During your formative years, did anyone ever label you? How has that stuck with you?

Chapter 6 (p. 57)

- Why do you think white people are still so over-represented in teaching? How might this affect non-white students?
- Did you or do your children grow up in a diverse setting? If so, in what way was it diverse? (racially, religiously, or in other aspects?) How did this diversity or lack thereof affect them?
- When did you first become aware of the existence of white privilege? How have you benefited from or been hurt by it?
- Examine the below graph and discuss your reactions to it. Do you see yourself in it?
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Racism Scale: Where do you fall?



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***Note: It is common for many people to move back and forth along the scale regularly, especially the middle parts**
**** The term "blacks" is used to be more familiar to anyone of those mentalities**
*****"Blacks" can be substituted with people of any nationality/ethnicity other than european white**

<http://racismscale.weebly.com/>

Chapter 7 (p. 67)

- What was your initial impression when you read about Harris's students likely having PTSD? Have people in your family had to heal from childhood traumas? Were you surprised that young children could be traumatized?
- In your opinion, what might have prompted school personnel to set Harris up to lie? If you were in her place, how would you have reacted?
- Why do you think such a simple strategy as the "feelings paper" had such a profound impact on the classroom climate?
- When you were a child, what would you have written on your feelings paper?
- Harris compares her traumatized students to troops coming back from combat. In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences?

Chapter 8 (p. 79)

- What do you think can be done about the vast disparity between school resources in different socioeconomic areas? What is one step -- even a small one -- to help underfunded schools?
- What about David's story on p. 82 struck you the most?
- How far do you have to go to get groceries? How would your life change regarding food access if you couldn't afford to have a car?
- Reflect on the section about Esteban on p. 87. What are some reasons a child like him may have looked to join a gang?
- Do you believe Esteban had other options? What might have happened in his life to make him believe this is his only option?

Chapter 9 (p. 91)

- What was your neighborhood like when you were a child? What would you have written in a neighborhood description?
- How does it make you feel when you read these neighborhood descriptions?
- What are some things you think of as "needs" that are really "wants"?
- The author presented both funny and sad statements by her students. Which ones do you connect with more strongly?
- Were you aware of different socioeconomic classes at a young age?

Chapter 10 (p. 105)

- Given all of Jorge's early childhood experiences, do you think he had a chance of living a happy, productive life? Why or why not?
- With dwindling budgets, how can schools more effectively meet the needs of students like Jorge so this is not an inevitable path?
- Many people perceive inmates as bad people or beyond hope. What would you say if you were talking to someone with this mindset?
- Harris has reconnected with Jorge. What messages would you like to send him? You may email these messages or questions to BronwynHarrisAuthor@gmail.com.

Chapter 11 (p. 119)

- Do you see any similarities between Jorge and Fred's stories?
- Growing up, did you have a teacher, family member, or other adult who was your "safe place"? What about that person made you feel safe?
- Reflect on the young people in your life. Who do you think you could reach out to who could use a trusted adult?
- If you could design a program to implement in juvenile hall, what would it look like?

Chapter 12 (p. 127)

- What do you think are the main factors that contribute to teacher burnout and what are some possible solutions or remedies?
- Before reading this book, were you aware of the amount of trauma that teachers take on on behalf of their students?
- Have you ever had a time when stress affected your health? If so, describe this.
- Do you have any ideas for coping mechanisms for people going through this kind of stress?
- Why do you think a program like Harbor House is so critical when children already have certain programs at school? What can we do to provide more of these types of programs to the kids who need them?

Epilogue (p. 137)

- Which of the success stories touched you the most?
- If you were advocating for change, which story would you be interested in?
- Now that you have read the book, does that inspire you to do something at the school level or do you feel more overwhelmed? If you would you like to do something at the school level, what would be a good way to approach a school if you wanted to help?
- If you wanted to advocate for change in policy, which elements would you focus on: Counseling resources? Funding under-resourced schools with a formula that acknowledges the role community volunteerism and local donations play in school budget? Teacher pay or other teacher resources? Food or medical access? Anything not mentioned?