

**Text 2** **White kids, racism and the way privileged parenting props up an unjust system.**

This past October, my son and his classmates lobbied their small private school to change the official holiday of Columbus Day to Native People's Day. My son wrote a short letter to the faculty explaining why they shouldn't celebrate white imperialism, and that native peoples were too often ignored or erased or pushed to the side in discussions of American history. Some parents didn't like the change, but the teachers and administration were supportive, and they changed the name.

As you'd imagine, my wife and I were very proud. We'd hoped to teach our son anti-racism, and here he was doing anti-racist activism in his own small way. We were glad we'd sent him to a school that encouraged kids to speak up, and was open to change.

At the same time, though, the school is a private school. Sending kids to private school is an option you only have if you have a certain amount of money. (...) And affluent people in the U.S. are often (though not always) white. We sent our son to a school that taught and encouraged anti-racism. But teaching people to be anti-racist doesn't necessarily address the structure of racism itself. In fact, racist structures often determine who does and does not have access to these kinds of educational opportunities. (...)

Margaret Hagerman, a sociologist at Mississippi State University, talks about these difficult contradictions in her book, “White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America.” (...) Some parents, Hagerman found, preferred to keep race unspoken. Families she interviewed in a wealthy, conservative suburb, for example, tended to avoid the topic of race with their children. “They adhered to a color blind way of thinking,” Hagerman told me. “They would say that race doesn’t matter, or that we’re beyond race.” One girl told Hagerman that in her school, they weren’t even allowed to say the word “racist” – it was on a list of forbidden words that also included homophobic, sexist, and racist slurs.

Noah Berlatsky, [nbcnews.com](http://nbcnews.com), January, 2nd, 2019