

A Guide to Using
ALL BECAUSE YOU MATTER
at Home and in the Classroom



AUTHOR'S NOTE

On the day my son, Christopher Sebastian, was born, he became the center of my universe. Sun-kissed skin, dreamy brown eyes, and a gentle “coo” that could turn me into a human puddle. Ever since his birth, it has been my greatest wish to hold him in the space of first steps, first words, first books. But time waits for no one.

As Christopher grew, so grew my own fears as a mother. I wanted to keep my little boy shielded from the cruelties of the world. But whenever I would turn on the news, I would see the same story line repeated as countless young Black men and women were taken away too soon.

In my son's early years, it was easy to avoid discussing the injustices against people of color. But soon, the questions came: Why did they assassinate Dr. King? Why won't you let me play with my Nerf guns outside? Time was up.

I knew I needed to have The Big Talk with my son. The one where I tell him that while there are many nice people in the world, not everyone is. And that sometimes people will treat others unfairly because of their skin color, race, or religion.

I wrote *All Because You Matter* to provide parents with a starting point for conversations about the racial climate in our country today. These are issues that should be discussed in all families, of all backgrounds, if we are to raise empathetic future leaders.

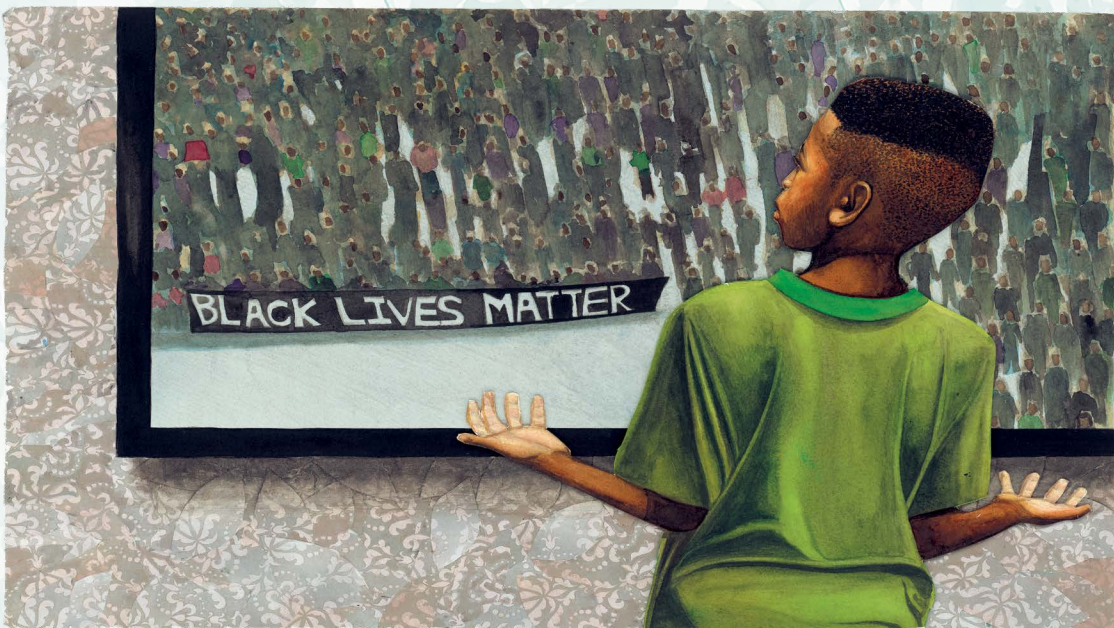
I also wrote this book to remind all children, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, that no matter where they come from, they matter. That the people who came before them, and the work that they did to secure the life we have today, matter. Because of this, our children must continue that work and carry themselves with pride, even when they experience moments in which they are made to feel unimportant.

I will not raise Christopher to walk in fear. And while I don't have the answers for how we can “fix” racial injustice, I can begin with this book—a loving tribute to the greatness that lives within my beautiful, brown-hued, brown-eyed boy and within all children, of all colors, everywhere . . . YOU MATTER!

TAMI CHARLES



Photo: Krisann Binett



ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

This project is a wonderful journey of promise and empowerment for our children, one that zooms through time and space. We start with a young couple anticipating the birth of a child, and then see them raise, love, and carefully guide that child through life with reassurance and a powerful sense of significance. It explores the duty we have as parents, caregivers, and world citizens to bestow love and value on our children and loved ones.

To visually tell this story, I started with the shape of a single flower petal to build a blossoming effect in all backgrounds—like the night sky, interior wallpaper, and the child's storybook. Faces appear on those petals, representing the voices of ancestors chanting: "You matter." As our main character is faced with navigating today's challenges of identity, self-worth, survival, and the ability to thrive, he is surrounded by a community of family.

BRYAN COLLIER

A stylized, handwritten signature of Bryan Collier in black ink.



Photo: © Bryan Collier



A NOTE FOR EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS

Reading *All Because You Matter* with children provides a unique opportunity for individual or group discussion about race, racism, prejudice, protests, the Black Lives Matter movement, family history, and affirmations about the value of Black lives.

In order to allow young people to better understand the world they live in, it is necessary to talk about race. In the United States, we recognize that there are certain groups that have historically been discriminated against and that those groups must be protected under federal antidiscrimination laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These laws and protections can seem complex, but at their core, they are simple: They uphold the American belief that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In classrooms and at home, there are many opportunities to show that justice and equity are important parts of your belief system and community values. Whenever an opportunity presents itself—whether it's something a child or adult says, an incident that happens locally or nationally, or something you read together—it's important to discuss and address topics or questions that arise. This will model communication and discussion, provide everyone a voice, and show respect for all. Learning opportunities around race and antibias are ever-present and ongoing. We can't expect young people to get it right the first time, and we can't expect adults to either! That doesn't mean we can't hold children or ourselves accountable, or strive to do better and continue to learn.

It is important, as those who educate and give care to young people, that we educate ourselves and provide children with the resources, time, and space to understand and address the complexities of dismantling racism. Simple and concrete conversations can help young people process and understand what racism is. These conversations can be as simple as answering the questions: What is one way we can use our voice today? What is one book we can read to help us learn? What can we create to help show we are learning to listen to and help others?

RESOURCES FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

The resources listed below provide professional development and materials to support educators and caregivers in discussions about racial justice, racism, equity, and inclusion. There are many more organizations and programs, but these should give you a place to continue your own journey into these topics.

- **CARLE Institute:** carleinstitute.com
 - **The Conscious Kid:** theconsciouskid.org
 - **Facing History and Ourselves:** facinghistory.org
 - **Leadership for Educational Equity:** educationalequity.org
 - **Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility:** morningsidecenter.org
 - **National Equity Project:** nationalequityproject.org
 - **National Museum of African American History and Culture:** nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race
 - **People's Institute for Survival and Beyond:** pisab.org
 - **Race Forward:** raceforward.org
 - **Rethinking Schools:** rethinkingschools.org
 - **Teaching Tolerance:** tolerance.org
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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The following topics for discussion provide information and talking points for your classroom; the resources provided share further learning and frameworks for discussion around specific topics at many levels; and the activities in the following pages provide fun activities and projects that will engage young people in thinking about themselves and their place in the world!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

WHAT IS RACE?

Race is an idea that people can be grouped together based on perceived physical characteristics such as hair, skin tone, or bone structure.

WHAT IS RACISM?

Racial bias or prejudice is the belief that certain groups of people deserve different treatment and opportunities based entirely on their perceived race, and racism is when people, groups, or systems that have power enforce biased treatment of a person or people of another racial group.

WHAT IS THE BLM MOVEMENT?

The Black Lives Matter Foundation is an organized movement advocating for nonviolent civil disobedience in protest against incidents of police brutality against Black people.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER LIVES, DON'T THEY MATTER TOO?

Absolutely. However, right now, Black men, women, and sometimes children are victims of police violence at a higher rate than other people because of systemic racism. So it's important that we recognize that there is injustice and discrimination in the way our systems value the lives of Black people—and that's why it's important to assert that Black lives DO matter.

Imagine you are outside playing with a group of friends. While you are playing, you fall down and scrape your knee. Should we give everyone a bandage because everyone matters, or should we give it to you because, right now, you need it more than everyone else? We should give you the bandage

right now, so you can heal. The rest of your friends are OK at the moment and can support you until you are better and ready to play in the same way they can. This is an example of equity—making sure that when someone is at a disadvantage, they receive the help they need! Similarly, it's important that people or groups that are at a disadvantage because of a system or structure receive more support—and saying Black Lives Matter shows that support!

WHAT CAN I DO? I'M JUST A KID!


Kids are powerful! Kids can change the world. You can use your voice, art, writing, or anything you want to speak out and take action against racism. This isn't always easy and sometimes you may have to ask a trusted grown-up for help. But you can do this! Speaking out against racism helps end racism. You can make things better!

WHAT ARE WAYS I CAN HELP?

Recently, people have been speaking out against racism by peacefully protesting. This means small and large groups gather to say, "No more racism! Racism is wrong!" By working together, they make their voices stronger and more powerful and help more people understand that racism is wrong.

With the permission and help of a trusted grown-up, you can support these protests—by marching, fundraising, making signs, or anything else you can think of to help!

You can create poems, stories, art, or music that help tell people that racism is wrong. Although you may be young, you can (and should) speak up for what's right.





LEAVES AND PETALS

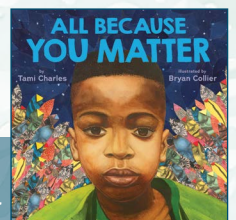
Did you notice the leaves and petals featured in the illustrations throughout the book? The illustrator, Bryan Collier, painted images on paper and then cut them into leaves—using different colors and textures, sometimes painting eyes and smiles and faces. Some of these leaves become backgrounds like the night sky, some surround the boy and support him, and some represent the story in a book or become a blanket.

Create your own leaves—from found objects around your neighborhood, images from a magazine (get a grown-up's permission before using scissors!), or images that you draw or paint and then cut out yourself. Use these leaves to create a collage—you can draw a picture of yourself (or your home, school, or friends!) with the leaves as the background, or you can create a full-page collage!

I MATTER!

YES, YOU DO!

Can you bake delicious treats? Do you know how to do a cartwheel? Are you a kind person? It matters that you love your family and friends and that you take care of other people. Write a list or draw pictures to show all the ways you matter. Post this someplace where you can see it every day. Be sure to add to this list over time—and use extra pages as you add more and more!





A LETTER FOR YOU

The author of *All Because You Matter*, Tami Charles, was inspired to write this book as a letter to her son. She wanted to show him that he was special and that he mattered. Think about someone who matters to you. It could be a family member, a friend, a teacher, or someone in your community.

Write or draw a letter to that person to make sure they know why they matter to you.

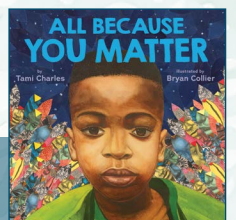
DEAR _____ ,

YOU MATTER TO ME BECAUSE _____

THANK YOU FOR _____ .

I HOPE YOU HAVE A GREAT DAY!

LOVE,





I AM SPECIAL

YES, YOU ARE!

All Because You Matter was written to highlight the ways in which one young person is special.

We see the different ways his mother and family celebrate all of who he is. You are special too! What do you like most about yourself? Is it your kind heart? Is it the way you include everyone when you play a game? Is it the way you always say hello to your neighbor?

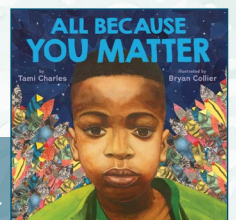
Using the page below or a different piece of paper, complete the sentence below and then draw a picture of what you like most about yourself. Make sure you include as many details as you can.

I MATTER!

MY _____ IS THE BEST PART OF ME BECAUSE

_____ •

I MATTER!





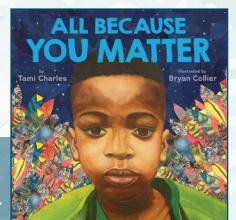
WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT?

In the book, the young boy walks into a classroom. There is a girl who looks very sad. She seems sad that her teachers and classmates don't know how to pronounce her name correctly. Names are important.

It is important that people say our names correctly.

What is your name? Write your name in the space below as big as you can.

Decorate your name with different designs and patterns. Your name matters.





WE ARE CONNECTED

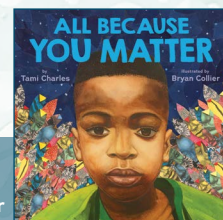

Look at the page where the family is hugging each other surrounded by their family and friends.

The illustrator wanted to show how we are all connected and that learning can't just stop with a family. It has to continue to our schools, our community, our world. By showing everyone in a circle, he also wanted to share the idea that we all teach each other and grow together, not just by having adults teaching children, but also by having children teach adults!

Think about a time when you've learned something from someone else—a game, a fact, how to do something. Think about a time when that person has learned something from you!

Draw or write about each of those times in the space below.

Bonus: What are other things that you can share or want to learn? Draw or write them down too!





CHANGE

There are times when you think one thing or in one way, but when you learn new information, it changes how you think! This is the way people learn how to make better decisions in the future. Changing your opinion when you learn new information is perfectly normal and a sign that you are growing! Think of a time when you thought one thing, something happened that made you realize your thinking might have been wrong, and you learned something from what happened.

Using the boxes below, draw or write about this experience. For example:

I Thought: I thought having a pet would be fun.

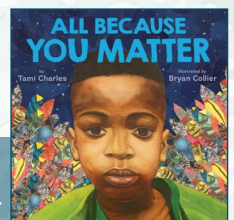
What Happened: I got a pet turtle, but it needed a lot of attention and care.

I Learned: Taking care of a pet is fun, but it's not easy. It's a big responsibility!

I THOUGHT

WHAT HAPPENED

I LEARNED

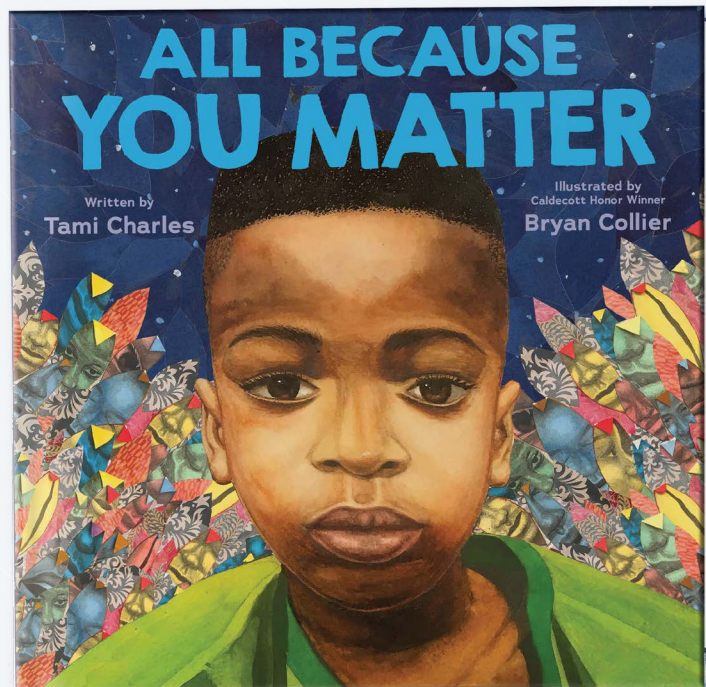


ABOUT ALL BECAUSE YOU MATTER

A lyrical, heart-lifting love letter to Black and brown children everywhere: reminding them how much they matter, that they have always mattered, and they always will.

Tami Charles pens a poetic, lyrical text that is part love letter, part anthem, assuring readers that they always have, and always will, matter. This powerful, rhythmic lullaby reassures readers that their matter and their worth is never diminished, no matter the circumstance: through the joy and wonder of their first steps and first laughter, through the hardship of adolescent struggles and the pain and heartbreak of current events, they always have, and always will, matter. Accompanied by illustrations by renowned artist Bryan Collier, a four-time Caldecott Honor recipient and a nine-time Coretta Scott King Award winner or honoree, *All Because You Matter* empowers readers with pride, joy, and comfort, reminding them of their roots and strengthening them for the days to come.

Discover this poignant, timely, and emotionally stirring picture book, an ode to Black and brown children everywhere that is full of hope, assurance, and love.



Hardcover ISBN: 9781338574852

Ages 4–8, Grades PreK–3

\$17.99 USD

Available as an ebook and as an audiobook download

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo: Krisann Blinn

Tami Charles is a former teacher and full-time author of picture books, middle grade and young adult novels, and nonfiction. As a teacher, she made it her mission to introduce her students to all types of literature, but especially

diverse books. While it was refreshing to see a better selection than what she was accustomed to as a child, Tami felt there weren't nearly as many diverse books as she'd hoped for. It was then that she decided to reignite her passion for writing. Tami is the author of the middle grade novels *Like Vanessa* and *Definitely Daphne*; the young adult novel *Becoming Beatriz*; and the picture book *Freedom Soup* in addition to *All Because You Matter* and the upcoming YA novel-in-verse *Muted*.

About the writer of this guide

Vera Ahiyya, known as the Tutu Teacher, is a dancing and singing, twirling and whirling, tutu-wearing kindergarten teacher who also serves as an educational presenter and consultant. Find out more about her at thetututeacher.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Photo: © Bryan Collier

Bryan Collier loves to paint. He has successfully channeled his creative energy and love of art into an illustrious career as a children's book illustrator and writer. He began painting at the age of fifteen and eventually landed a

scholarship to attend Pratt Institute in New York. His books have received numerous awards and accolades including four Caldecott Honors, nine Coretta Scott King Honors and Awards, the Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor Award, the NAACP Image Award for Best Children's Book, and the Ezra Jack Keats Book Award. Bryan lives in New York City.