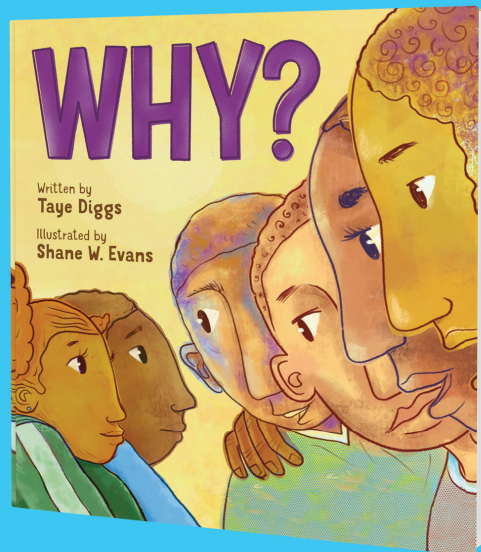


# A Parent's Guide for **WHY?**

A Conversation About Race  
by **Taye Diggs** and **Shane W. Evans**



Guide written by **Germaine Tarver**

Germaine Tarver is an educator and writer. She has a BS in music and an MEd in education. Her career in education spans just shy of twenty-five years and includes classroom teacher, literacy coach, and supervisor of literacy. Tarver is also an author of children's books and young adult fiction. You can find her YA title, *If It's Magic*, on Amazon. She is a native of New Jersey and is happily married with two wonderful teenagers!



# WHY?

Written by Taye Diggs and Illustrated by Shane W. Evans



TAYE DIGGS is an actor whose credits include motion pictures (*How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Chicago*), stage, (*Rent*, *Wicked*), and television (*Private Practice*, *Murder in the First*, *Empire*, and *All American*). He is also the author of *Mixed Me!*, *Chocolate Me!*, *I Love You More Than. . .*, and *My Friend!*, published by Feiwel and Friends. He lives in Los Angeles and New York City with his son.

SHANE W. EVANS is the illustrator of numerous award-winning (NAACP Award, Coretta Scott King Award) books for children, including *We March*, *Underground*, *Mixed Me!*, *Chocolate Me!*, *I Love You More Than. . .*, and *My Friend!*. He is based out of Kansas City, Missouri, and travels extensively to gain inspiration. Shane can be found in Dream Studio LLC where he creates and serves the community.

*Why?* Is a delicate yet straightforward treatment of the effects of racism. Taye Diggs's story is brilliantly told through the words of adults and children's interpretations of those words. Shane Evans's illustrations expertly illuminate the persistent pain of a Black community immersed in the hurt of racism. Through words and pictures we feel the confusion of children who are trying to make sense of the wrongness of racism. Out of children's inquisitive, caring nature comes a solution that just may change the way a community of people in pain chooses to deal with their situation.

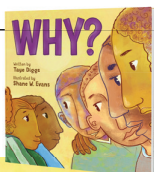
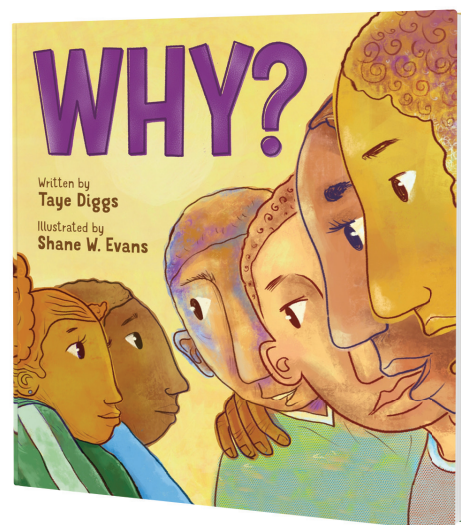
## A Note To Parents And Caregivers

Thank you for choosing to read this book with the young person in your family. Having a conversation about racism is never easy but through *Why?* you will find the words to discuss this topic in ways that shed light, uplift, and bring hope.

We are hoping that you will use this guide as a way to get the most out of the conversations that will arise not only as you read the book but also well after you have closed it. Included are activities that can be done before you start reading to ensure your little one has a clear understanding of topics that come up in *Why?* here are also questions for each set of pages that you can ask your child and activities to engage in after you have read the book.

Do not feel that you must complete every activity and ask the suggested questions in order to get the most out of *Why?* This is a guide to support you as you read the book and take part in important conversations.

Enjoy reading *Why?* with your family!



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### Before Reading Activities

**A Picture of Love:** Have everyone draw a picture of what it looks like to love one another. This should do this separately, then when time is up, have everyone come together and share their pictures, telling exactly what they drew and why. Be sure to take note of the similarities in the pictures as well as the differences. Let the pictures serve as your family's model of what it looks like to love one another. Refer back to these pictures as you read the book with your child.

**A Picture of Protest:** Share with your child pictures of protests. Maybe you have pictures of your own family protesting or you can use some from books, magazines, or the Internet. Show your child how to analyze these pictures by allowing them to do the following:

- read the placards people are holding
- note any writings or sayings on people's clothing
- note the look on people's faces
- take note of the types of clothing people wore (especially in the 1950's and 1960's)
- point out that people who were not Black marched alongside Black people

Talk to your child about some reasons why Black people protest in the United States and how protesting makes people feel. You may also want to talk to your child about why people in other countries protest.

### During Reading Activities

Read the book with your young person. Allow them to notice and absorb the story. Have conversations about what they are thinking. Go back and reread the book. (This second reading does not have to be done right after the first reading, or even on the same day. Your child will probably need time to process the book and the conversations that you have had.) Below are questions you may want to ask your child when you have finished reading. In the parentheses after each question are possible answers that you may use, if you like.

#### Cover

- How does the illustrator help us see that this is probably a loving family? (Note that family members are talking to and listening to one another. They stand closely, some with arms around each other. The adults look as though they care about the thoughts and feelings of the children.)

#### Pages 6 and 7

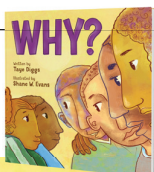
- What is the large group of people on these pages doing?
- When the boy refers to the people as "those people," the father responds by saying "our people." How does the father help the little boy understand that these are his people?
- Why do you think the father says, "We need to be heard" two times?

#### Pages 8 and 9:

- Look at the illustration. How can you tell that it took the little boy a while to understand what his father said? (We can see from the illustration that it is now sunny. Perhaps the boy did not understand what his father was saying until the next day.)

#### Pages 10 and 11:

- What is the group of people on these pages doing? (The people are mourning the death of a loved one. The person may have died where the people are standing.)



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- How does the mother help the little girl understand that these are her people? (When the girl refers to the people as “those people,” the mother responds by saying “our people.”)
- Why do you think the people who lost their family member put candles, flowers, a teddy bear, a balloon, and a picture on the ground? (The family has created a memorial to celebrate the life of their loved one. A memorial lets people know that they will not be forgotten.)
- It seems like the adults on page 11 are probably sad about losing their family member. Why do you think they chose to put items on the ground that we give as gifts during happy times? (The family is showing their family member that they are loved, even though they are not with them.)

#### Pages 12 and 13

- Why do you think the mother says, “We are in pain.” two times? (The author is showing us that this is important and the mother really means it.)
- Look at the illustration. How can you tell that it took the little girl a while to understand what her mother said? (We can see from the illustration that it is late at night. Perhaps the girl did not understand what her mother was saying until much later.)

#### Pages 14 and 15

- What is the group of people on these pages doing? (The people are mourning the death of a loved one.)
- How does the grandmother help the little boy understand that these are his people? (When the boy refers to the people as “those people,” the grandmother responds by saying “our people.”)
- How are the people in the Black community helping each other? (In the illustration we see men of different faiths and different ages supporting one another during difficult times.)
- Why do you think the grandmother says “We need help.” two times? (The author is showing us that this is important and the grandmother really means it.)

#### Pages 16 and 17

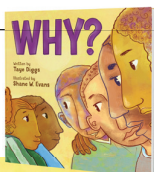
- Look at the illustration. How can you tell that it took the little boy a while to understand what his grandmother said? (We can see from the illustration that it is now morning. Perhaps the boy did not understand what his grandmother was saying until much later.)

#### Pages 18-19:

- What is the large group of people on these pages doing? (The people are protesting.)
- Why do you think the grandfather says “We have been stomped on and stepped over for way too long.” two times? (The author is showing us that this is important and the grandfather really means it.)
- The illustrator did not put any writing on the signs that the protestors are carrying. What do you think some of the signs might say? (Discuss any response your child gives.)

#### Pages 20 and 21

- Look at the illustration. How can you tell that it took the little girl a while to understand what her grandfather said? (We can see from the illustration that some time has passed because the girl is now on the tennis court. Perhaps the girl did not understand what her grandfather was saying until later.)



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Pages 22 and 23

- On these pages, the girl and boy are probably worried about the burning buildings in their neighborhood. What else do you think they may be worried about? (They may be worried that people in their neighborhood are sad and angry. They may be worried that their own homes could burn down. And they may be wondering if life for them and their people will always be like this.)

Pages 24 and 25

- Look closely at these two pages. How can you tell that the adults are just as worried as the children are? (We can see the look of worry on their faces. We also see them looking out the window. We also see the adults reacting to the kids' fears.)

Pages 26 and 27

- What are some of the things that the adults are saying Black people are tired of? (The adults tell the children Black people are tired of being ignored and hurt for such a long time.)

Pages 28 and 29

- How does the author show us that the adults have a hard time stepping away from the pain of hatred? (The author writes, "The anger burning those buildings is us.")
- How does the author show us that the children know how to step away from the pain of hatred? (The boy begins to pray and the girl sits crossed-legged and closes her eyes. She may be meditating.)
- How do the illustrations on these pages show us that the children have become a new solution for an old problem? (The moon and the buildings that are the backdrop for the adults' feelings about the ways to deal with hatred become the little boy's head and shoulders as he prays. Rays of sunlight become the backdrop for the boy and girl as they pray and meditate.)

Pages 30 and 31

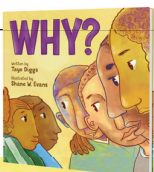
- Why do you think the author is telling us exactly what the girl and boy are thinking now? (Perhaps he wants us to know exactly what the children came up with to solve the problem of hatred.)

Pages 32 and 33

- Do you think the children's plan to stop the hatred worked? (It appears to have worked because the people seem to be happy and free from hurt.)
- What does the illustrator do to show us that the children's plan probably worked? (The illustrations show a bright yellow sun, possibly representing a new day. We see birds flying, possibly doves that represent peace. We also see people who not only look happy but are colored gold and who now feel joy instead of anger and pain. Some may see the gold-colored people as flames of peace, whereas before the fires burning the buildings were flames of anger.)
- What do you think is an important lesson that the adults learned? (Respond to your child's comments.)
- How do these pages make you feel? (Respond to your child's reactions.)

Pages 34 and 35

- Why do you think the children are saying, "Oh."? (Maybe they now understand what it takes to stop the anger and hurt of hatred.)
- What do you think is an important lesson that the children learned? (Respond to your child's comments.)
- How do these pages make you feel? (Respond to your child's reactions.)



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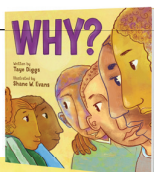


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### Post-Reading Activities

**Refrigerator Notes:** Create a numbered list titled, “What I Can Do.” Hang it on the refrigerator and allow everyone to write any acts of kindness that the family can do to make the community, the state, the country, or even the world more peaceful and joyous.

**How I Can Help:** Is there an organization that your child might want to help that brings peace and joy to people? Sit with your young person to research different organizations that act for the improvement of people’s lives. Perhaps your child might like to volunteer at a food pantry or learn conflict-resolution skills to help others stand up against bullying. You are teaching your child that everyone can help solve a problem!



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