

P.E.A.C.E. News for April 2021

***Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere, Inc.
(P.E.A.C.E., Inc.)***

***Please contribute to our future as we support the
peaceful world we and children need to thrive.***

Donate



Picture courtesy of Kid World Citizen

Statement to Condemn Asian Hate from NAEYC Asian Interest Forum in Solidarity with People of Color Caucus

It is with a heavy heart that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Asian Interest Forum (AIF) condemns the tragic murders in Atlanta, Georgia, which resulted in eight deaths, including six Asian women. We stand with the families of the victims and offer our sincere condolences. We share their pain, as we grapple with the truth that such an attack could have happened to any one of us Asian Americans. In light of these heartbreaking events, we are appalled, angry, and deeply saddened.

This incident is not an isolated one. More than 3,800 anti-Asian hate crimes have been reported in the past year alone, with a significant number of these attacks directed at Asian women. In addition, since many of these incidents never get reported, this statistic is likely a grim underestimate. Harassment and violence against Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) persons, families, and communities have increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to inflammatory rhetoric and anti-Asian xenophobia. We denounce all instances of violence against Asian Americans and stand in solidarity as members and allies of the Asian American community.

It is our duty as early childhood educators to provide space for all children to have honest conversations about racism, discrimination, and bias. We must teach our children to recognize instances of systematic discrimination and institutionalized racism from a young age. It is our job to help children who are witnessing such racism by teaching them to call out the injustices we experience in our communities.

As Asian Americans, we share equal rights with every American in the land of the free. We refuse to be continuously identified as the model minority, and we refuse to stay silent. Hear our anger, our voices, and join us in condemning hatred and violence toward our Asian co-workers, parents, children, and relatives. We must stand up and advocate for one another when ignorance and bigotry threaten members of our community. Let us unite in the fight against Asian hate.

In solidarity,

Sandy Baba, Ph.D., Shu-Chen Jenny Yen, Ph.D., NAEYC Asian Interest Forum Facilitators.
Co-signed by NAEYC People of Color Caucus Executive Committee, and later signed by
Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere, Inc.

Resources

Supporting Children's Executive Functioning Skills Through Nature and Play

By Karin Pavelek

We are well aware of children's lack of exposure to nature in today's society, especially when thinking about the current pandemic. When talking to a Dutch colleague of mine, he mentioned that in the past several decades this is the second pandemic that is affecting our children. The first pandemic actually started about 12 years ago, when we noticed children staying inside more due to technology such as playing video games, watching TV, interacting via the computer, and using cell phones. Due to this phenomenon, we see a lack in play and social interaction, which typically support children in the process of building relationships, developing language, as well as a healthy self-esteem.

When we think about nature and play, we often forget the important benefits children gain from this interaction. Not only is it supporting physical growth and a child's mental well-being, but it also plays an important role in the development of executive functioning skills. These skills are a combination of brain activity and real life experiences, which are crucial in the early years and much needed for later academic success. When children are playing in natural environments, they develop mental flexibility, inhibitory control, and a working memory. Think about it: I can exercise on my treadmill; however, riding my bicycle outside will require me to focus, use my problem and critical thinking skills, to manage and navigate accordingly.



Child exploring the growth of vegetables and edible plants in a raised bed garden
(Picture courtesy of CDES Lab School at Fullerton College)

Spending time outdoors in nature really benefits children most. They can engage in unstructured playtime, be creative and learn about their surroundings, and carry out numerous learning opportunities. An article in *Community Playthings*, provides us with the following ideas:

- Provide sensory experiences
- Create spaces for discovery
- Give children something to talk about
- Encourage gardening
- Provide physical challenges
- Inspire constructive play

Learn more about the benefits of nature to executive functioning skills:

<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2017/learning-naturally>



Children playing and interacting in the mud kitchen area
(Picture courtesy CDES Lab School Fullerton College)

Dear Olive Branch

A P.E.A.C.E. Perspective on Practical Problems

Difficult Conversations

Sooner or later, difficult conversations become necessary. As teachers, concerns about children will come to our attention usually through behavior. After we have observed and tried several strategies, we realize that talking to the family will be needed. How to have those conversations to bring about the best possible answers to help the child be successful and happy at school is the goal. Following are some guidelines as well as some success stories. Look for how some of the steps were used in the stories.



Steps that may help guide the process:

1. Develop clarity on your concern. Is your focus on a small annoying behavior or a bigger issue such as socialization?
2. Gather facts. For instance, is there a pattern for when the behavior occurs? Is the environment a factor?
3. Pre-think what you are going to say to the family or colleague. “Role play” words to use to bring up your concern. What words can you use to share your concern and express empathy?
4. Ask for help from the parent (or staff member) in resolving the situation. “Parents know their child best.” What ideas might be proposed from the parent that could be used in the school setting?
5. Do your best to build a partnership. What can we do together to support the child’s best development?

Speech Problem

I was teaching a preschool class in Virginia, and I became concerned about the speech of one of the children. The child was not saying consonants. For instance, she would say, “I o u ore,” when she meant “I go to the store.” I asked her mom if I could talk with her one day after school. I told the mom that other children and parents were not understanding

her daughter, and she was beginning to be frustrated. I told the mom that I knew she wanted her daughter's preschool experience to be a positive one.

I asked the mom what she noticed at home. Her daughter was the youngest of four children, and mom said that everyone seemed to be able to understand what her daughter said. I asked her to listen and ask the siblings what they noticed.

The next week the mom came to me and said that the family was filling in consonants and not even realizing it. Mom and I worked to have her daughter screened for speech. She was able to attend speech therapy at her neighborhood elementary school. (J.D.)

Child with Body Odor Problem

At the beginning of the year, during my first year of teaching in a parent cooperative program in Oregon, I had an unsettling puzzling experience. A likable popular girl in the class sometimes had an odd body odor – but not always. Because it wasn't an all-the-time problem – I hesitated to say anything to the parents. As the months went by, it became a problem for the child. On days when she had the odor – the other children began to avoid being close to her. As time went by her friends began to distance themselves from her even on days that she smelled okay.

My gut said I should tell the mother, but how do you tactfully tell a parent that their child has such a problem? And that it is causing her to have social problems with her peers. Finally, I ended up scheduling a conference with the mother. I rehearsed what I was going to say. I began by telling her that I observed the change from being sought after and included in play, to being excluded. I mentioned that sometimes she had a strong body odor, and that the other children reacted to it by distancing themselves.

The mother was devastated and wished that I had said something sooner. She proceeded to tell me that her daughter had bad night sweats. The family was used to her smell, and hadn't thought anything of it, and certainly didn't imagine that it would be a problem. The mother knew that the solution was for her daughter to have a morning bath, instead of having one before going to bed at night.

Once the bath routine was changed at home, the girl's social status returned to how it had been at the beginning of the year. She was a happy and included child again.

My takeaway was to, from then on, get up the courage to broach difficult conversations when I first saw a problem. (M.S.)

Following Directions Problem

I was called into the Head Start classroom as a behavior specialist to observe a child who would start shaking and crying every time the teacher or the aide suggested that he was not following the directions given to him. I spent some time in this classroom that day, as I like to gather what information I can about the situation. This little guy was about four years old, very curious and fairly active, and it was odd that he was reacting so strongly to being told that he needed to follow directions. It wasn't long before the child needed to be reminded to stay in line to get a drink of water, and he indeed was brought to tears, and started shaking as if something bad were going to happen to him.

It just so happened that I had worked as a home visitor the year before, and I knew the child's family. I was fairly surprised over the child's behavior. I had spent a lot of time working with this child, as well as both his father and mother during the previous year. I made an appointment with the father to go and talk to him about what I was seeing. I had been thinking about what I was going to say to the father. I decided the best route was to start with asking how life was going with the family. I thought a direct route would be most effective, so I then explained exactly what I had seen at school. Next, I asked the father how the child was corrected at home. The father then told me a story about how his father beat him severely over the least little thing when he was a child, and that was what he was doing to his boy. The father was upset, and I listened. He hadn't meant to scare the child, nor hurt him. The father really did not know what to do to help the child control his behavior. The child had gotten a year older from when I had last seen him, and apparently was trying to be more independent. He didn't always know what would upset his father. After hearing the story, my guess was that the father did not know how hard he was hitting the child, since he had been severely abused when he was little.

Then I steered the conversation into a discussion of some strategies he could use when his child did something that he did not like. The father started to understand that the models he knew from growing up were not appropriate. I suggested that since the father would just lose his composure when his son was misbehaving, that the father could give himself a "calm down time," and leave the situation until he got himself under control. The father told me that he would never hit his son again and would try other methods, which we had brainstormed and discussed together. When his son did something he didn't like, after he calmed down, he would explain to his son what he wanted him to do. I thanked the father for the conversation, and let the father know that I would check back in with him in a couple of weeks.

Since I am a mandated reporter, I did not know if I would need to follow up with a report to the appropriate authorities. I had heard what the father said he did, but I hadn't actually seen what had happened, nor had I seen bruises on the child. I trusted the man's word that he would not hit the child ever again.

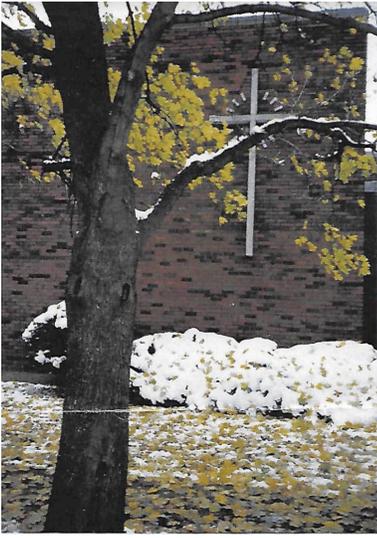
I checked back in with the school in about two weeks. The child had calmed down, and was mostly following directions, without any incidents of crying or shaking. It does take some time to learn what is expected in a classroom. (D.S.)

NOTE: We chose "Dear Olive Branch" as the title for this column for several reasons – foremost as a sign of peace. Also olives come in many colors, sizes, tastes, uses – a sign of diversity just as there are many types of questions and those who send the questions. We hope "Olive's" responses will help you, the reader. If you have a question for Olive, email it to us at 1peaceeducators@gmail.com.

*Topic for the next Dear Olive Branch column: **Adapting to change.***

With the changes in the pandemic, more children are meeting face-to-face in classrooms. What are your ideas, stories or questions for encouraging children to become friends and for developing a welcoming classroom community?

Poetry for Us, Then and Now



Lois Clark is one of the founding members of CEASE (Concerned Educators for a Safe Environment, now P.E.A.C.E., Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere.) She joined Peggy Schirmer at an NAEYC conference in 1979. Peggy had invited Dr. Helen Caldecott to present on the dangers of nuclear radiation and the bomb testing. Her talk launched the organizing of the peace effort of CEASE, ongoing and much needed still, over forty years later. Thirty years ago Lois found this picture in her Head Start classroom in South Bend, Indiana. The yellow leaves on top of the snow inspired her to write this poem, “Time”. She sent it to P.E.A.C.E. in February with her belief that it speaks to us in our time.

Time

By Lois Clark

Winter moved in before Fall bade adieu
Bringing to sight an unusual view.
Ordinarily snow blankets leaves on the ground—
But—look at the different sight that I found:
Snow underneath! with the leaves on top!!
And leaves still on limbs of the tree overhead!
Is there a message here being displayed, I said?
Then came the tho’t: We keep saying, “Time flies”—
Well—here is the proof, Look where the snow lies!

Hope

When do you hope? In the darkest night?
Just before dawn—or in broad daylight?
“Hope springs eternal,” the poets say,
So not even terrorists can sweep it away!
How to keep Hope in our world today?

And what if old patterns of Nature give way—
Like Winter's snow early before Autumn leaves fall,
Can these unrelated instances give us answers at all?

Yes!

Just as Time passes from Season to Season
Whether outwardly, signs seem out of reason,
Life has taught us that Love will find the Way
To bring its long-awaited Day!

Because

We were not created to self-destruct
But were given the talent to help construct
The Highway to Hope—instead of Despair!

Lois wrote in her letter, "Keeping up with the unbelievable impasse the [then-] present imposter was able to pull off occurred because too many Rip Van Winkles have not woken up from a long winter's nap. But Spring is on its way. The Spring that we have worked for so long, with the belief that Truth shall make Love's message clear and we will dispel our error, doubt, and fear. I'm so grateful for my relationship with Peggy Schirmer's effort at that NAEYC workshop when the presenter (Dr. Helen Caldecott) told us about the nuclear threat and spurred the organizing of our peace efforts."

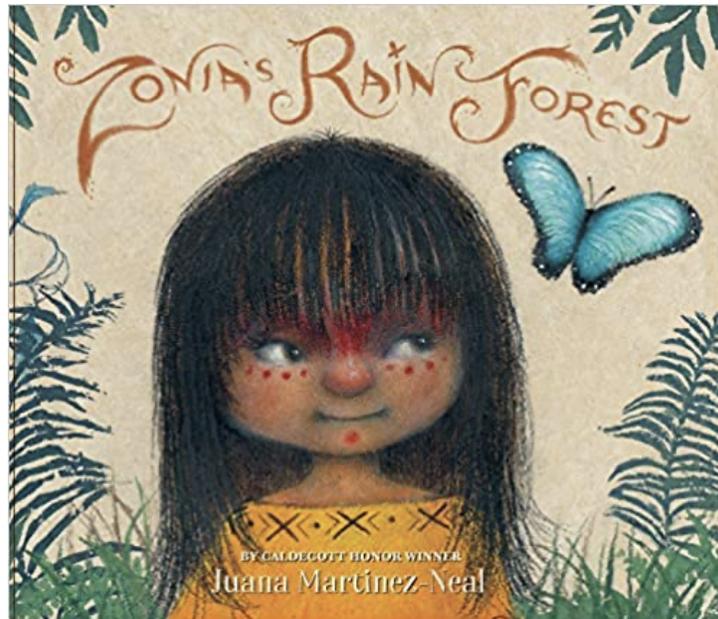
Book Review

Zonia's Rain Forest

Written and Illustrated by Juana Martínez-Neal

Candlewick Press, 2021

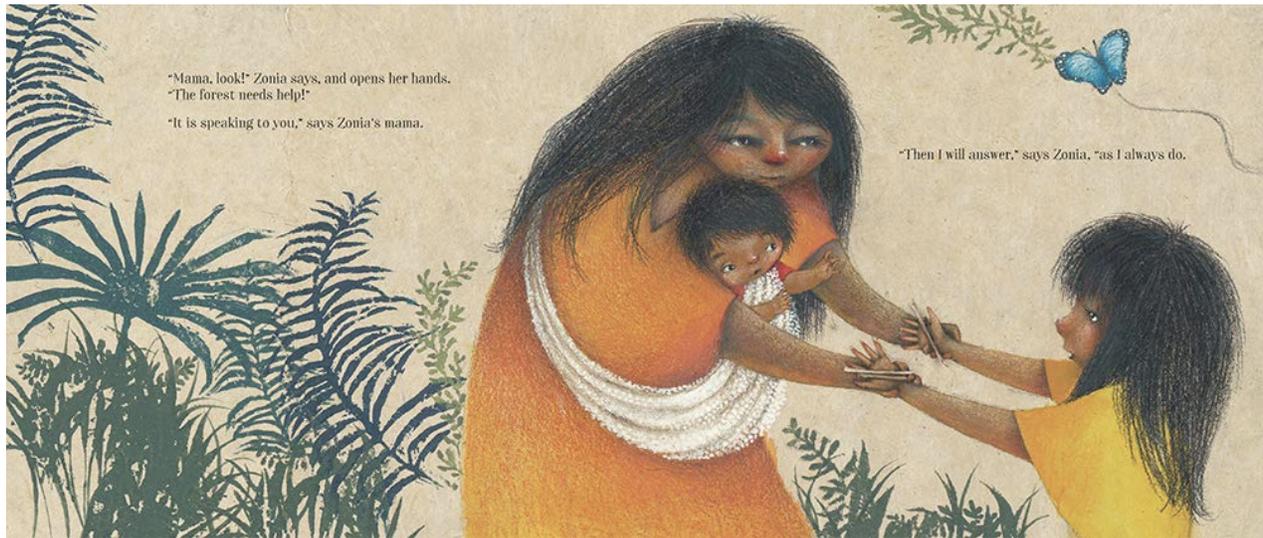
Ages 4-9



Zonia, a young Asháninka girl, lives in the Amazon rainforest with her mother and little brother. She begins each day wandering barefoot through her neighborhood of lush jungle, enjoying and conversing with all her animal friends. Zonia visits blue morpho butterflies, river dolphins, a sloth family, a speedy jaguar, an anteater family, the coati and others.

“Zonia lives with those she loves in the rain forest,/ where it is always green and full of life,” begins Martínez-Neal in this look at the ever-changing Peruvian Amazon. *“Every morning, the rain forest calls to Zonia./ Every morning, Zonia answers.”*

The story moves through her day in short sentences, reflecting Zonia’s innocent view of the world. This book becomes a cautionary tale in which we explore and celebrate the rainforest with Zonia until she stumbles upon a frightening new reality where the trees and undergrowth have been clear cut—and only stumps remain.



This stark scene is Martinez-Neal's call to action for her readers. The images, of mixed-media art, are created with acrylics, pastel, colored pencil, ink, linocuts on banana bark paper, and woodcuts, that are so striking you will feel as though you are walking through the rain forest with Zonia.

The Asháninka are the largest Indigenous group living in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest. Notice at the end when Zonia has red paint on her face. The rubbing of paint from plants is to show strength and determination.

The backmatter of the book includes a full text translation of the story into the Asháninka language by Arlynder Paulino, facts about the Amazon, and a list of threats to the area. There are also wonderful thumbnail sketches of the animals that Zonia befriends.

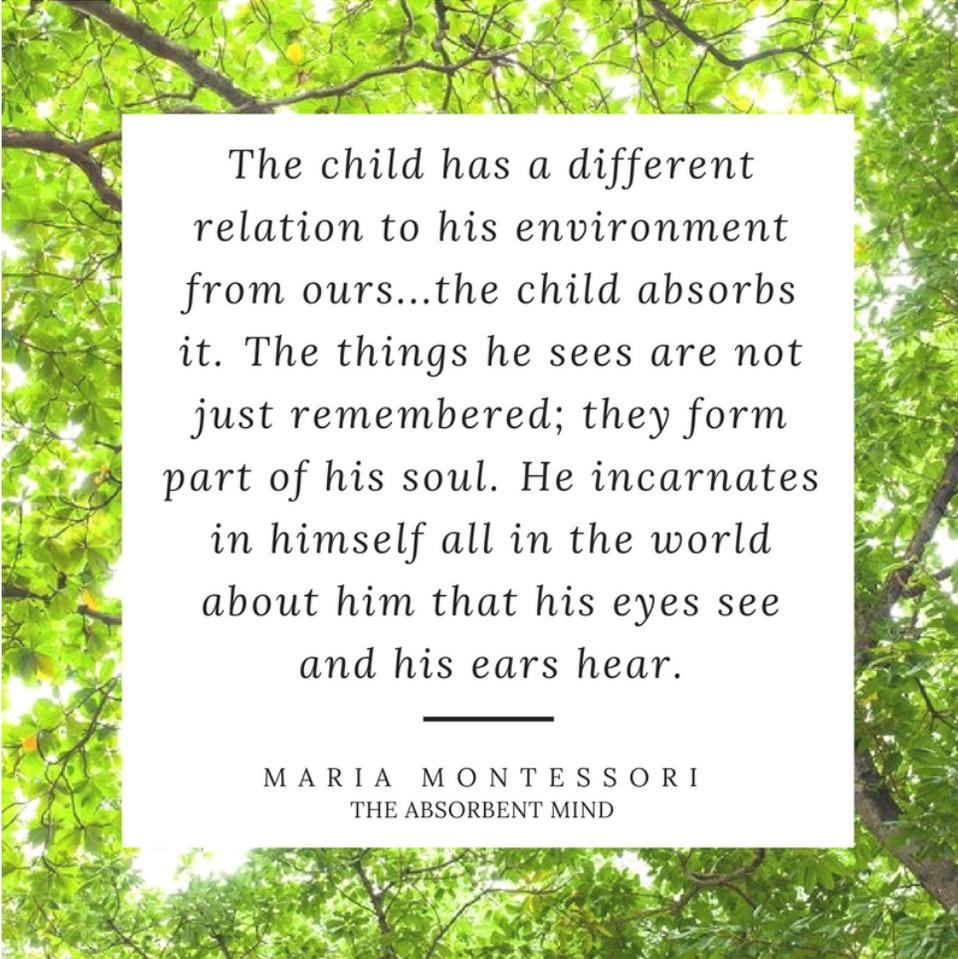
Readers will remember Zonia and her rain forest and it may lead to further discussion. The Spanish edition is [La Selva de Zonia](#).



Enjoy this brief [interview with the author/illustrator Juana Martinez-Neal](#) who is the Peruvian-born daughter and granddaughter of painters. She dedicated this book "To the indigenous people of the Amazon" and we are grateful.

Submitted by Karen Kosko

Quote of the Month



The child has a different relation to his environment from ours...the child absorbs it. The things he sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul. He incarnates in himself all in the world about him that his eyes see and his ears hear.

M A R I A M O N T E S S O R I
THE ABSORBENT MIND

Days of the Month

April

April 20 - Chinese Language Day

The United Nations (UN) observes the UN Chinese Language Day every year on or around April 20. The contribution of Chinese literature, poetry and language in world culture is highlighted on this day. [Explore this online guide to Chinese American children's books.](#)

April 22 - Earth Day

Pictures courtesy of Schriever Kids Celebrate Earth and Eco Advisors



How Kids Save the Planet This Month

By Katie Overmonds

1. Refuse, Reuse, & Recycle.
2. Implement Meatless Mondays.
3. When back to school, create or join a Green Team.
4. Turn off the lights & earn pocket change, too.
5. Borrow instead of buy.
6. Fight off energy vampires.
7. They don't have to be superheroes to save water.
8. They don't have to be The Hulk to have a green thumb.
9. Be their own Captain Planet and protect the forests.
10. Spread the word.

***Contribute to P.E.A.C.E.
Gardening Peace Project***



Pre-COVID days, Catholic Charities of Boston in Dorchester, Massachusetts applied for a Peace Projects award to fund “Gardening with Infants and Toddlers - Teaching Peace to the Youngest Children”.



Gardening requires counting seeds, planting, watering, and harvesting of vegetables. Everyone is part of this Peace Project; infants watched, others worked together. Toddlers are part of every stage. They loved sharing with the younger children. The award from P.E.A.C.E. helped to purchase the garden beds, the tools, the soil, and the children's books for the project.



Children working as a community at a young age learn skills for the common good, how to cooperate and be peaceful together. Thanks to P.E.A.C.E. for aiding in this project.

Support PEACE Projects

Your contributions help fund peace education initiatives similar to the Gardening Peace Project. P.E.A.C.E. relies exclusively on donations to fund these innovative, educational projects.

Donate Now!

You're Important to Us!

Help us keep in touch!

Please contribute to our future as we support the peaceful world we and children need to thrive.

We are eager for new members, and active members. Membership is free, although you're encouraged to help us as you can. Spread the word and let us know how you would like to be engaged at 1peaceeducators@gmail.com.

Join Now

Donate

f Follow us on Facebook

Join the NAEYC Interest Forum

Help bring peace education to the profession and the public!

If you would like to bring P.E.A.C.E., Inc.'s perspective to more teachers on the ground working with young children, there are opportunities both in person and online.

Particularly on [NAEYC's HELLO open forum](#) we have seen opportunities to engage on these issues.

Join actforpeace@googlegroups.com to follow our members' recommended actions and share your own! You can sign up at 1peaceeducators@gmail.com or directly through Google Groups. We hope you will spread the word about the actions by forwarding them on to others.

Visit our Website, peaceeducators.org!

