

...ING HAPPENED  
...UR TOWN

Children's /  
Social Justice  
Ages 4-8

CELANO, COLLINS & HAZARD  
SOMETHING HAPPENED IN OUR TOWN  
MAGINATION PRESS

Emma and Josh heard that something happened in their town.  
A Black man was shot by the police.

“Why did the police shoot that man?”

“Can police go to jail?”

*Something Happened in Our Town* follows two families—one White, one Black—as they discuss a police shooting of a Black man in their community. The story aims to answer children’s questions about such traumatic events, and to help children identify and counter racial injustice in their own lives.

Includes an extensive **Note to Parents and Caregivers** with guidelines for discussing race and racism with children, child-friendly definitions, and sample dialogues.

**M**agination Press  
Published by the  
American Psychological Association  
[www.apa.org/pubs/magination](http://www.apa.org/pubs/magination)



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# SOMETHING HAPPENED IN OUR TOWN

A CHILD'S STORY ABOUT RACIAL INJUSTICE



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**S**omething bad happened in our town.  
The news was on the TV, the radio, and the internet.  
The grown-ups didn't think the kids knew about it.  
But the kids in Ms. Garcia's class heard some older kids  
talking about it, and they had questions.





After school, Emma asked her mother: “Why did the police shoot that man?”  
“It was a mistake,” said her mother. “I feel sad for the man and his family.”  
“Yes, the police thought he had a gun,” said her father.  
“It wasn’t a mistake,” said her sister, Liz.  
“The cops shot him because he was Black.”

Emma was confused. “He is brown, not black,” she said.  
“Some Black people have dark brown skin, and some have light brown skin,” Emma’s father explained.  
“‘Black’ usually means African American. Most of their ancestors were brought here from Africa as slaves.”





In another house, Josh asked his mother:  
“Can police go to jail?”  
“Yes,” said his mother. “Why do you ask?”  
“That White policeman who shot the  
Black man,” said Josh. “Will he go to jail?”  
“What he did was wrong,”  
said his mother.

“But he won’t go to jail,” said his father.

“Why not?” asked Josh.

“Cops stick up for each other,” said Josh’s brother, Malcolm. “And they don’t like Black men.”

Josh was confused. “Why not? Some police are Black.”



“You’re right,” said his mother. “Uncle James is a police officer, and so is my friend Kenya.”

“There are many cops, Black and White, who make good choices,” said his father. “But we can’t always count on them to do what’s right.”

