



# LITTLE LIGHTS TIMES

## ONE YEAR INTO THE PANDEMIC

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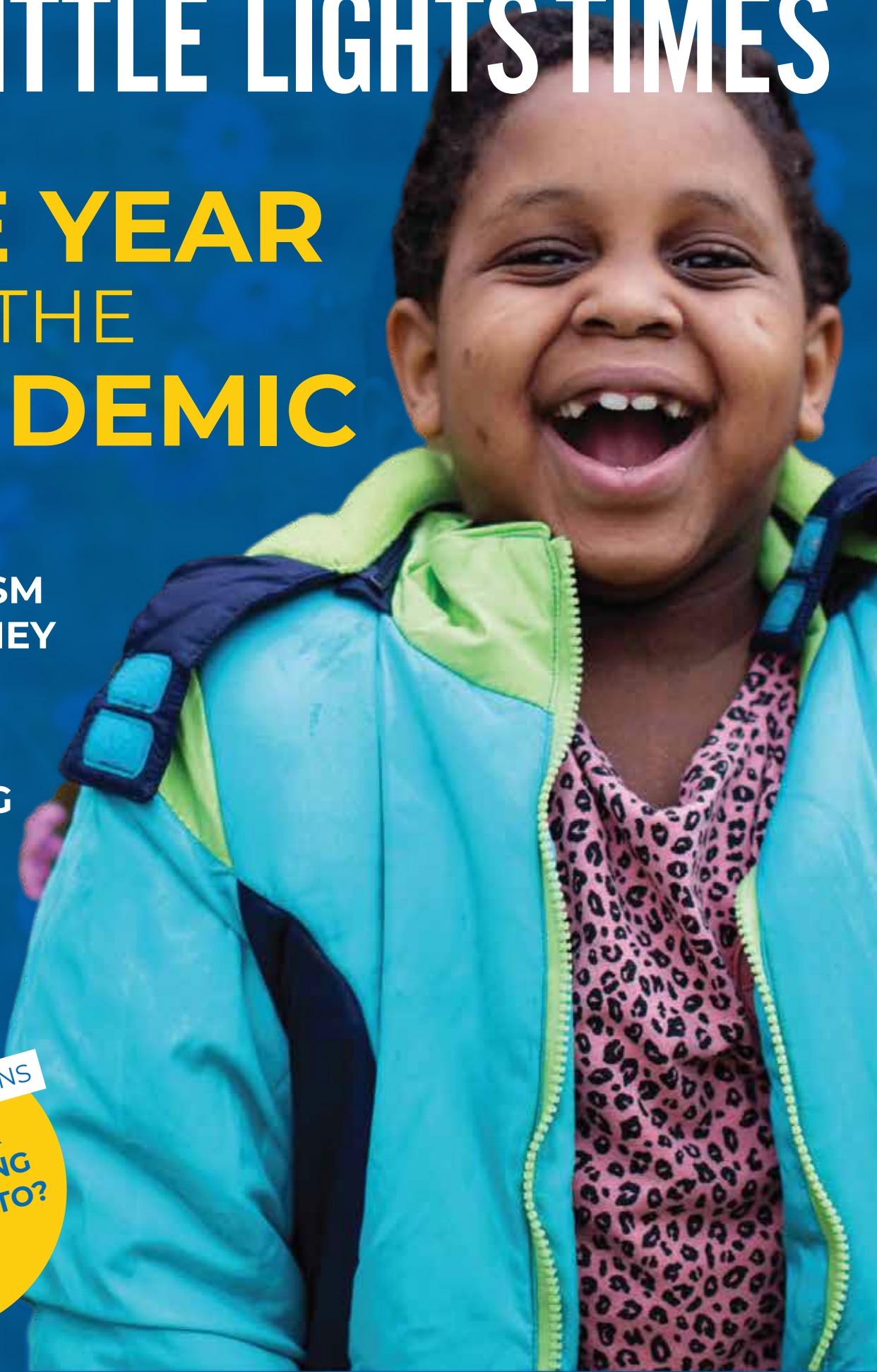
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A MAN IS WORKED UPON BY WHAT HE WORKS ON. HE MAY CARVE OUT HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT HIS CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CARVE HIM OUT AS WELL.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It has been more than 12 long months since all of our lives were upended by the Coronavirus.

I remember the day we learned that all public schools were shutting down, then making the decision with our senior staff to also pause all of our programs and close our office to regroup. We wondered whether schools would be shut down for a month, 3 months, or even longer?

We began to prepare for a new reality. We quickly pivoted as an organization to provide emergency relief like to-go meals, groceries, and household supplies. We passed out internet-enabled tablets and laptops to help our students access our virtual programs. We were recreating Little Lights on the fly and our staff did an amazing job through this crisis.

So much has happened in the world and at Little Lights since those anxious and disorienting days in March of 2020.

As difficult as this time has been, I am excited about the new technology infrastructure created by the pandemic.

That technology is pivotal to the new college and career readiness program we are piloting for

middle and high school students. With so many people around the world now comfortable with video conferencing like Zoom, we are able to access more human resources than ever before. We even had a volunteer who worked at NYU Admissions but now lives in Hong Kong do a session with our students about the college admissions process!

Since launching the college and career readiness pilot in January of 2021, we have seen remarkable results - drastically improved grades, increased accommodations from schools, and even one college acceptance. The schools where our students attend have been so impressed with the results that they are asking if we can take on additional students.

Times are definitely tough, but at Little Lights we are always looking for opportunities to help our students and families in new and innovative ways. Thanks again for your support!

**Steve Park**  
*Executive Director & Founder*





# THE NEXT STEP

Rebecca\*, an 8th grade student, wanted to go to a different high school.

She felt the high school in her neighborhood was not challenging enough academically, and shared with Little Lights program staff her goal: *attend a high school that will set her up and prepare her for her dream of going to college and working in the field of mental health.*

Rebecca\* was connected to Little Lights back in 2016 when she was in 5th grade, and is one of several students taking part in Little Lights pilot college and career readiness program.

Over the last few months, Rebecca\* has spent hours working with Little Lights staff and her Little Lights mentor, Beth, to narrow down her top high school choices, learn how to best navigate DC's school application and lottery process, and write and refine drafts of her personal essay.

The result of months of prep - admittance into her top choice, School Without Walls High School, ranked #1 in U.S. News & World Report's Best High Schools in the District of Columbia.



Little Lights is often associated with its high quality programs for elementary students, but now we're expanding our scope to work with middle school and high school students through a new program that focuses on college and career readiness.

Teddi Beschel, Little Lights Volunteer and Mentoring Coordinator who will work with 8th-10th grade students in the career and readiness program sees our new program working hand in hand with the mentoring program.

As students have aged out of our elementary and middle school programs many of them remain connected to the organization through the Little Lights Mentoring Program. "Our mentoring program was the primary way that we kept in touch with students once they went into high school," Teddi shared. Mentors have often been key advocates in getting [academic and career] support for their high school aged mentees."

Teddi also sees the career and readiness program as a way to offer high level, intensive support to high school students, like Rebecca\*, living in public housing.

In 2015 ACT released a report, *The Condition of College and Career Readiness: Students from Low-Income Families* and found that most students are not prepared for the academic challenges of college, but low-income students are especially vulnerable. The report's key findings showed that low-income students will have fewer postsecondary educational opportunities, struggle academically, and will complete college at lower rates than their higher-income peers.

One way to address this? Establish the foundation of college and career success early.



By connecting teens to college counseling, virtual college tours, preparation courses for the SAT and ACT tests, and daily 1:1 tutoring - all services provided through the new college and career readiness program- Little Lights wants to close the college accessibility gap and connect students to a network of much needed resources to help them decide what to do after high school graduation.

Currently, Little Lights is closely working with 12 teens in the pilot college and career readiness program, with hopes of opening up this service to more youth in the fall.

*"The students that come through Little Lights are world changers, leaders, influencers. They have amazing talents and gifts," Teddi said. "I am excited that with this new program, we will be able to continue walking and deepening our relationships with students, like Rebecca\*, who have been part of Little Lights for years."*



# ANTI-RACISM

## A JOURNEY NOT A DESTINATION

A Q&A WITH KARMEN AND KRISTY,  
RACE LITERACY CONNECTIONS FACILITATORS

Race Literacy Connections gives Race Literacy 101 alumni access to a range of monthly affinity groups offering continued education for people who want to deepen their anti-racism journey.

We sat down with two small group facilitators leading affinity groups this spring and asked them about why continuing anti-racism education is necessary.

### WHICH AFFINITY GROUP DO YOU LEAD?



**KARMEN**

I co-lead the Theology, Race and Justice Affinity Group with Nicole Noyes.



**KRISTY**

I lead Current Events in Racial Justice.

### WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THERE TO BE EDUCATION AROUND THIS TOPIC?



**KARMEN**

I always say, theology drives behavior, and I'm proven right again and again. Religion, specifically the Christian faith, has played an important role in the development of American culture. Specially, white evangelicals and African American protestants believe many of the same things on paper, but those two groups behave vaery differently in regards to social justice. Christian faith has been used to justify slavery but also fueled the Civil Rigths movement. We explore why in this affinity group.



**KRISTY**

The Current Events in Racial Justice Affinity Group creates space for participants to learn and discuss how to properly discern and respond to current events in the news through a historical lens. There has been so much historical miseducation around issues of race in the US that it's been beneficial for participants to have the space to discern current events with others.

*"RELIGION, SPECIFICALLY THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE."*

**RACE LITERACY CONNECTIONS MEMBERS HAVE A BASELINE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT "RACE" IS BECAUSE THEY TOOK THE RACE LITERACY 101 COURSE. HOW DOES THIS COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING IMPACT THE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS YOU LEAD?**



**KARMEN**

We deal with some uncomfortable and challenging truths. If a person has completed Race Literacy 101, it means they have already been exposed to and dealt with difficult truths about America and are ready to continue with hard discussions.

*"IF A PERSON HAS COMPLETED RACE LITERACY 101, IT MEANS THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN EXPOSED TO AND DEALT WITH DIFFICULT TRUTHS ABOUT AMERICA AND ARE READY TO CONTINUE WITH HARD DISCUSSIONS."*



**KRISTY**

The common experience of completing the Race Literacy 101 class means we can skip the process of trying to convince participants that something is wrong and go directly into deeper conversation and thoughtful engagement.

**WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST INTERESTING PIECE OF INFORMATION YOU'VE COME ACROSS WHEN PREPARING TO LEAD AN AFFINITY GROUP? HOW DID IT CHANGE OR CHALLENGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE?**



**KARMEN**

This may be a very challenging statement, but my research continues to show that many of the beliefs within white American Christianity contribute to racial oppression in America, and that the roots of racism in American Christianity can be traced to the earliest moments of the faith. Christianity has liberated me in countless ways, to learn how it has been corrupted to oppress others, and from the very beginning, has been hard. However, I am comforted by how the faith has also inspired countless people to be courageous and fight injustice.



**KRISTY**

The most interesting piece of information might simply be that there's always more to learn. Because we live in an intentionally racialized society, each current event will have several layers of problematic impact for Black and Brown individuals and communities. For example, when we address violence against our AAPI brothers and sisters, the layers of problematic impact we can discuss include issues of historical injustice, harmful educational stereotypes, the over sexualization of Asian/Asian American women, and microaggressions that imply exclusion of Asian Americans (i.e. the "perpetual foreigner") to name a few.

*"THE MOST INTERESTING PIECE OF INFORMATION MIGHT SIMPLY BE THAT THERE'S ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN."*

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

FURTHER YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF ANTI-RACISM WITH THESE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR STAFF.

### INTRODUCING: NICE WHITE PARENTS THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Recommended by Teddi Beschel, Mentor Coordinator**

This podcast gives insight and explanation to inequality in the educational system and how the voices of white parents are heeded to more readily than the voices of parents of color. This has been particularly impactful for me as Little Lights is becoming more involved in schools and witnessing the inequity in the school system first hand.

### THROUGH THE CRACKS NPR

**Recommended by Karmen Taylor, Program Director**

An 8-part podcast series that focuses on Relisha Rudd, an 8-year-old girl who disappeared from a DC homeless shelter in 2014. It is a very informative, heartbreaking, but an educational listen that touches on homelessness, eviction, foster care, poverty, and education in DC.

### CHOCOLATE CITY: A HISTORY OF RACE AND DEMOCRACY IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

**CHRIS MYERS ASCH AND GEORGE DEREK MUSGROVE**

**Recommended by Steve Park, Executive Director & Founder**

This book is an excellent and in-depth history of our nation's Capital.

### WHY THIS WAVE OF ANTI-ASIAN RACISM FEELS DIFFERENT

THE ATLANTIC

**Recommended by Katie Larkins, Office Manager & Program Coordinator**

This article is a timely reminder about how important Little Lights' racial reconciliation work is. It is an overview of how racism has been experienced by the Asian American community historically, but also particularly this past year.

### TED TALK, MINDSET SHIFT: TRADITIONAL EDUCATION TO HOLISTIC TUTORING WITH JAY VEAL, M.ED.

**Recommended by Linda An, Program Coordinator**

Jay Veal, CEO of INC Tutoring, discusses the importance of a holistic approach to education to empower students of color. It focuses on not only the academics but the social emotional wellbeing of students.

JOIN THE LITTLE LIGHTS  
COMMUNITY FOR A  
24-HOUR DAY OF GIVING!

# LITTLE LIGHTS GIVING DAY

THURSDAY, MAY 13TH, 2021

HEAR THEIR STORIES

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS PUT UP  
\$30K IN BONUS FUNDS FOR US TO UNLOCK.

GET INVOLVED:  
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