

Answer to a 5-Year-Old Son

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A young boy –
untainted by the horrors of the world,
clean and innocent –
turns to his father with a troubled mind.

"Papa," he says in his child's voice.
"Why won't the white boys play with
me?"
His big brown eyes stare up into his
father's face.

A silent sigh escapes the father's lips
as he prepares to stain his son's small
world.

"Son," he begins quietly.
"We're different, we all are."
The father shakes his head,
discouraged by his own words and the
ones to follow.
"They hate us because of our race."

"Race, Daddy?" the boy repeats with
young innocence.
"Did we win the race?"

With a part smile, part grimace,
the father replies, "No, Son."
A tear trickles down his cheek.
"We're losing quite badly."

The boy looks up, eyes round with
honesty
as he says, "Well, why don't we win?"
And as he skips away, he sings,
"We'll win! I'll make us win!"

And the father sits, watching his boy,
knowing the truth.
Another tear falls for the boy and his
race,
for the father knows he can't win –
not without help from the other team.

*(Written in response to a quote from Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr.: "When you have to concoct an
answer for a 5-year-old son asking in agonizing
pathos: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored
people so mean?' ...")*