

Sweepin' The Clouds Away

Empathy Towards Racial Injustice, Brought To You By Sesame Street

Since 1969, *Sesame Street* has been making a difference in the lives of people everywhere. The much beloved preschool television show was created to, as stated by Robert W. Morrow, “help all unschooled pre-kindergarten children prepare to enter school.” It did this by using short, commercial-like segments that taught children how to use their cognitive, language, and social skills in addition to things outside of standardized education to insure children could develop a better relationship with the people around them.

Specifically, *Sesame Street* was created to help “particularly low-income, African-American, urban youngsters” become ready for public school. While it was a champion in giving kids educational value, it also focused on racial injustices. The program made sure to include, according to David Kleeman, “different races living together” and was carefully composed of African-American, white, Latino, and Asian girls and boys, men and women. As its popularity grew, *Sesame Street* began to emphasize its focus on other marginalized groups, actively promoting its racial tolerance message towards other ethnicities and races outside of its initial look at inner-city African-American children. The success that followed this focus led to *Sesame Street*'s critical rise in children's television and further still, the representation of other groups as well, such as women and, most recently, those with developmental disorders.

This presentation will show how *Sesame Street* has actively used its platform to promote the advocacy for racial justice in three key moments in its history.