

## **Review of “Something Happened In Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice” by Maryanne Celano, Marietta Collins, & Ann Hazzard**

“Something Happened In Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice” is a children’s book that focuses on two young children and their families, one white and one black, as they discuss the shooting of a black man by a white policeman in their community. The first portion of the book consists of conversations between the white child and her family regarding the police shooting of a black man in their town. The second portion of the book focuses on the conversation that occurred between the black child and his family in regards to the same incident.

The conversation between the white child and her family consists of her parents explaining to her that the police shooting of the black man was a “mistake”. **The white child’s father goes on to state that, “the police thought that he had a gun”. The white child’s older sister then states, “it wasn’t a mistake. The cop shot him because he was black”.** The white father in the story goes on to explain, “black usually means African American. Most of their ancestors were brought here from Africa as slaves”. The white father then goes on to state, “even after slavery ended white people didn’t let black people live where they wanted, go to school with white people, or vote”. The white child goes on to ask, “Did our family do those bad things a long time ago?” and the white mother answers, “Yes, back then many white people thought that they were better than black people even though it wasn’t true.” The little girl’s white older sister adds, **“some white people still think most black men and boys are dangerous even though they are not”.** The white child then asks, “Was the man that got shot dangerous?” and her mother answers, **“No, shooting him was a mistake. It was a mistake that is part of a pattern.”.** The white mother then continues by saying, **“this pattern is being nice to white people and mean to black people. It’s an unfair pattern”.**

The next portion of the book focuses on the black child as he discusses the same police shooting incident with his family. The conversation between the black child and his family opens with the young child asking, “Can police go to jail?”. The black child’s mother answered, “Yes, why do you ask?”. The child goes on to ask if the white police officer that shot the black man will go to jail. **The child’s mother explains that what the police officer did “was wrong”. The child’s father goes on to state, “but he won’t go to jail”.** When the black child asks his father why the police officer won’t go to jail, the child’s older brother interrupts and replies, **“cops stick up for each other and they don’t like black men”.** This left the black child confused because “some police are black”. The child’s father goes on to state **“there are many cops, black and white, who make good choices but we can’t always count on them to do what’s right”.** The black child’s older brother goes on to add, **“I could get stopped by the police**

**just because I am black even if I didn't do anything wrong".** The younger black child then asks, "What if it was a white man in the car? Would the police have shot him?". The black child's father answers by saying "They probably wouldn't have even stopped the car".

Although the book goes on to make a few good points about sticking up for others who may not be getting treated fairly, the direct statements alone from characters throughout the book, both white and black, promote the idea to children that all police are racist. The underlying theme of the book is the racial profiling of black Americans by law enforcement. The book portrays law enforcement to be untrustworthy and racist.