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The Conversation Black Parents Perfected—That All Families Now Need

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It is 1955 and the hot Mississippi sun is blazing overhead. Miles away in Chicago, a Black mother is having a conversation with her 14-year-old son. She tries to impress upon him the often subtle but dangerous realities of what it means to be Black in America, and how one misinterpretation, one lie, could result in his death. That boy is Emmett Till, and in her memoir, *Death of Innocence*, Mamie Till-Mobley reflects on “The Talk” she delivered to her son before his historically tragic trip to Mississippi.

This version of The Talk dates back to American chattel slavery and has been passed down for generations in Black families, shaped by ongoing racial violence and unequal treatment. But recent violent and fatal encounters involving US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have forced families across lines of race, ethnicity, and immigration status to confront the reality of their precarious existence in America—and start talking to their children about how to stay safe. Black families’ experience on how to have these conversations is now, tragically, something many families can learn from.