

6.10: Anti-Racist Education at Home and in the Classroom

Tue, 7/12 11:42AM 47:23

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

kids, teachers, children, people, anti, conversation, learning, curriculum, classroom, parents, home, hear, racist, stories, kiddos, education, caregivers, ditto, teaching, racism

SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Alex Scott

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Six, Episode 10: "Anti-Racist Education at Home and in the Classroom."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:16
Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the confidence you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want " a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:51
Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. I don't know if you can hear it on the recording, but I'm sitting in my very empty bedroom " like completely empty " and it feels super echoey. So I hope that it's not bothering you as much as it's bothering me. But as many of you know, my family is gearing up to move across the country. We are moving from Phoenix, Arizona, specifically Mesa. We live in Mesa, Arizona. But for those of you who are like, "Arizona what?" Phoenix is the place that most people usually know. We're moving from Phoenix, Arizona, all the way to Washington, DC. We're moving to a suburb outside in Maryland. And today is the day we are finishing packing up our pod. Tomorrow morning, they're coming to take our stuff away and ship it across the country. So there's nothing in this room. It's me and my computer sitting on the floor. But if you listen to our episode last week, the interview with Patrick Harris, you will notice a little bit of a theme: we have been focusing a lot on anti-racism in the classroom. And I want you to start thinking about this before you even get into back to school mode, because it's so important that we start these conversations with our school

leaders early on. We don't want to wait till the last minute and have them feel so stressed because they've got so much going on with curriculum and getting everything ready. So if we can reach out to people now it would be so powerful, and we would really be able to help make change in the classroom too.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:25

So for today's episode, we are going to be talking about anti-racism both at home and in the classroom. And there are really two reasons why I want to share this episode with you. This episode is an interview that I did with my friend, Alex Scott from Ditto Kids. And one of the main reasons I want to share it with you is because she has recently told the world that she is taking a little break from making magazines. So Ditto Kids is an anti-racist magazine for children and the caregivers who love them. So we have all of them in our home. And they would be the perfect thing to share with your kiddo's teacher for the upcoming school year, because they really can be used in and outside of the home. So I want you to hear this conversation that I had with Alex, because she isn't making any more new inventory. What she has is what she has, and once it's sold out, it's done. Like, it's gone. So I want you to have these amazing anti-racist magazines in your life and in your libraries, in your home and in your classroom. And if you're flipping through, you might notice a name that you recognize. I actually got to write an article for Ditto Kids! And it was truly one of the biggest honors of this anti-racist journey that I've been on as an educator. So I hope that you will go and get your hands on some Ditto Kids magazine issues before she runs out of all of her inventory.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:54

So that is the first reason I wanted to share this episode with you. The second reason is just because anti-racism in the classroom is so stinking important. And I think, I don't know how to explain it, but it just seems like people know how important it is and that's why they're fighting so hard against it, you know what I mean? So much of our school curriculum is focused on the comfort of white students, on centering white students, on making them feel comfortable and really trying to make sure that they only know positive parts of their ancestry. And it's really frustrating as someone who grew up Black biracial in a very conservative white suburb of Arizona. I know I didn't get the education that I deserved when it came to understanding the truth and the full picture of history. And as I've been packing, one of the things that I've been doing is going through all of my teaching stuff to decide what I can share with other teachers and what I cannot part with, because hopefully someday I'll be back in front of students again. And as I was flipping through one of the curriculum books that I used to teach students, I found this letter that you're supposed to send home to the parents. So at the beginning of every unit, we had letters that we could send home to parents about what we were learning and how they could bring the learning home or talk about the topics around the dinner table with their kiddos. So this is not a letter that I wrote; I was asked to use a scripted curriculum. So the curriculum was not something that I chose for my students, and it was not a letter that I wrote. I don't remember actually sending this letter home. But I was reading through it like...oh my goodness. So the unit was about immigration and the United States. And in the letter, it talks about how it's really important for parents to help their children make personal connections to what they're learning in school, which of course, yes, that's super important. But in the letter, it says that this is the personal connection that they would like students to make to the learning. It says, quote, "Share with your child your family's immigration story. When did your family first

come to the United States? From where did they emigrate? Later in the domain" (that just means unit), "your child will have an opportunity to retell this family history to his or her class." End quote. So take a minute and put on your anti-racist glasses and think about what the problem is here. What is the problem with this personal connection section of the letter? Obviously, they are number one centering white children, centering European Americans who came from Europe to the United States, right? They're like, what was this peachy immigration story that your family has? Let's think about the fact that Indigenous peoples were already here. So not everybody has an immigration story. Let's think about the fact that there are a lot of people who are brought here against their will. That is not called immigration, that is called kidnapping, torturing and enslavement. And let's think about the fact that me as a teacher in South Phoenix, with a primarily Latine population of students, those kiddos might have immigration stories that are extremely traumatic, whether they themselves have been the ones who are at the center of the story experiencing the trauma. I know that I had students who went through that, or their parents, someone very close to them, their aunts, uncles, grandparents, went through something super traumatic to come to the United States. And some of them might still be living through that immigration story and living in fear of what might happen to them because of their immigration status. So this personal connection is clearly for people who came from Europe and are living very comfortably now in terms of their immigration status. And it's little things like these that remind me why anti-racist education is so important, because I'm sure the person who wrote this letter home to parents, this scripted curriculum, I'm sure they were not trying to leave people out, I'm sure they were not maliciously thinking, "Oh, what about all of those students that are going to be very hurt by this personal connection section?" Of course, they weren't thinking about that. But that's the point. They weren't thinking about that. They were thinking about, probably, themselves and who is always centered in the story, which is white Europeans.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:29

So anti-racist education is so stinking important. And I'm super grateful to Ditto Kids magazine and Alex Scott for everything that she has done over the past two years, to be able to give these resources to families and to teachers so that we can have something really tangible and really practical to share with kiddos about what it means and what it looks like to be anti-racist. All right. So I'm going to share with you a little bit more about my friend Alex Scott from Ditto Kids, and then we'll jump right into the interview.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:01

Alexandria Scott is a former nonprofit professional who has worked with and advocated for children in the field of education and beyond. A mother and writer, she's passionate about creating beautiful, diverse, and action-invoking resources, and invitations for children and their caregivers to learn about the world around them and their role in it as we work towards a more equal peaceful and just world. Doesn't she sound like she could be like my anti-racist sister or something? I'm telling you, we are cut from the same cloth and it will not surprise you to know that we are friends in real life.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:40

One thing I wanted to mention before we jump into the interview is that Alex uses the acronym

"ABAR." And if you're not familiar, ABAR stands for anti-bias anti-racist education. So usually you'll hear people just shorten it to ABAR education, and it just means anti-bias anti-racist, so when she's talking about her magazine or when she's talking about using ABAR in her home, that's what she's referring to. So I hope you enjoy this interview that I did with Alexandria Scott, the editor-in-chief and founder of Ditto Kids magazine.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:13

Okay, so as I told you guys, I am so excited about this interview. I'm here with Alex Scott of Ditto Kids magazine. Alex, thank you so much for coming on the show.

A Alex Scott 10:23

Thanks for having me. I'm so excited.

A Alex Scott 10:25

So let's start with, can you tell us the origin story of Ditto Kids for those who might not be familiar with your work?

A Alex Scott 10:33

Sure. So Ditto Kids, it really came, you know, just became something that started out from my needs. As a mother " I have almost four kids under the age of seven " and about three years ago, well, I guess four years ago now, I had some experiences with my oldest daughter, where she, when she was about a young three, she was exposed to some racist ideas from another kid who was only, she was only like five-and-a-half, but she was going through some tough things, this other kid. And my daughter, she, you know, she had a hard time with it, it's really hard to process this thing, these things, as a very young child, especially when you're hearing things from another child who you kind of looked up to kind of thing. And so I started seeing not only her parrot some of these things that the other child said to her, but, you know, being, you know, a biracial-Black child, I saw, and it was heartbreaking to see that those first moments of, you know, just that recognition come over her face, that, oh, it was just so heartbreaking. It was awful. And I had always been really intentional, intentional about teaching diversity and inclusion to my kids. But I don't think I had been all that on top of anti-racism. And I, in that moment realized, like, "Oh, you know, what, I don't have the tools as a parent to be able to teach my kids anti-racist anti-racism right now and give them an anti-racist education, or an anti-bias education." And so I started, you know, doing like, going to conferences and workshops, and just researching and reading everything I could get my hands on. And I sat back, and I was thinking, "Wow, this is incredibly difficult." Like, I have like a time budget, I have financial budget, but like, obviously, I would do anything for my child. But like, this is just like, not the reality in terms of, you know, familiarity with the subject material. And like, I already had kind of, you know, quite a bit of a foundation in this kind of stuff. And so I started writing a curriculum for myself and my kids, I worked on it for a long time. And I started applying the things that I had learned with my daughter, and things got better, and it was great. Lots of puppets involved, lots of like, you know, just it took a lot of work, you know. But

obviously it was 100% worth that work. So I wrote this curriculum. And I realized that, you know, I should really make this available to more people, because if me coming from, like, my educational and my work background, and you know, just my own personal background as a Black woman, had to put a huge amount of time and energy, and like research and resources into giving my child the education that she needed, like, you know, that's that's a pretty big ask for a lot of the population. So it's really tricky to do. So, you know, really, we, and I ended up creating this magazine. And what the magazine is, is it's actually a curriculum that's in magazine format. So that, you know, you get the first issue then the second issue, which we have out now. And then you just keep going and you have this curriculum in your home to help you out.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:31

Yes, I love it. I mean, we have Ditto in our home and I use it when I'm doing research for the podcast. I'm thinking about, "Okay, how can I say this in a way that parents are going to be able to relay this information to their kids?" And you break it down so well, and of course I use it with my own kiddos as well.

A Alex Scott 14:49

Oh, I love that. That's awesome.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:51

Yes, one of the things that I heard you say that really stuck out to me was you were teaching diversity and inclusion, and you realized that you needed to, to kind of progress or make that jump to anti-racism. Will you talk just a little bit about what are the differences that you see between diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism?

A Alex Scott 15:10

Yeah, sure. I'll talk a little bit about, you know, how my family was and continues to use diversity and inclusion as like an educational framework in our household. So before I started Ditto Kids, I actually ran another business where we did language learning through play, language and culture learning through play with native speakers for kids zero to six and their caregivers. And I did that for a few years, it was so fun. Language learning, culture, you know, learning is a big part of our family's value system. So you know, that's like the going to museums, the getting the books to learn about different cultures, and trying to, you know, diversify your spaces and things like that. And all those things are so important. And I actually have been noticing that that is a part that gets really left out of anti-bias and anti-racism education advocacy now, because we've gone like, so far to the anti-racism spectrum of things, that it's easy to forget that part. But it really should be like a marriage and anti-racism is more, you know, the concrete steps that you can take as a person to help, you know, change the structures around us that are supporting racism and other forms of bias, and then to also change yourself so that you can change these structures.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 16:42

Yes, thank you for breaking that down for us. Because I think that that is something that's really helpful for people to hear put into clearer terms. Another question that I had about Ditto Kids magazine is, do you feel like this is a resource that's best for classrooms or for people to use in their homes? What do you think?

A

Alex Scott 17:03

That's a great question. Honestly, it really works well for both with the way that we've formatted it. I do firmly believe that the cradle for this kind of learning is the home, because that's just where it all starts. Parents and caregivers are the ones who kids really tend to take their cues from so they may, I want kids to be hearing these things in school 100%, and they should, but ultimately, so much comes down to their primary caregivers' attitudes and actions. So I love to encourage caregivers and educators to sit down and snuggle up on a chair and have those heart-to-heart conversations that the magazine is designed to help prompt. That's much trickier in a classroom setting, of course, but there's absolutely a need and a place for anti-racist and anti-bias education in schools. I feel like school is the laboratory of life. For these kids, when it comes to this kind of stuff, it's where the rubber hits the road. It's where the chance that they, where they have the chance to put the values that they have learned maybe in the home into practice. And so I feel like it's ideally, it would be a marriage of the two, you know, it would be both.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 18:29

Yes, yes. I just have to say "amen" to all of that. I feel like, this is why, for those of you listening, this is why we are such good friends, because I feel like everything that Alex says I'm like, "Yes! That resonates so deeply." I want to move into a little bit about the differences between anti-racism in the classroom and anti-racism at home. Because depending on your family structure, you may have, you know, a more, I mean, not our families, I guess I shouldn't say that. Because we don't have a monolithic-looking family, we definitely have a mixture of melanin, amount of melanin in our children and with our husbands and all of those types of things. But definitely in the classroom, you're going to see a lot of diversity within the students. So what are some suggestions or recommendations that you have when it comes to talking to children about anti-racism when you are looking at groups of kids who are diverse?

A

Alex Scott 19:28

That is such a great question, because it is something that very few people talk about. But I firmly believe that the emotional needs in the current climate that we have for children of color and white children are very different. And so you know, it's, and you know, that's it's just going to be different for the classroom versus the home. So, first of all, with all learning at home, anti-racist education is and can be tailored exactly to that one child or those two or three children and where they are in their journey. I like to imagine ABAR and anti-racist education as kind of being like, it's like a wave, you know. And the, you know what a wave is, for me, it's kind of like drawing from water and power that's like underneath the surface. And like, you can't really see it at the beginning. But you know, it's a lot of, there should be a lot of work done to lay that

beginning foundation before that wave can start to form and curl. And I feel like that is especially true for children of color, because their self esteem, their self love is so deeply in jeopardy if anti-racist education isn't handled correctly. And so having the opportunity for children of color to be taught in the home is huge. And I think that's why, you know, there's such a huge movement right now, of Black homeschoolers.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:59

Yes,

A Alex Scott 21:00

So many parents are like, "Uh, no, I'm not doing this," and they're taking their kids out of school, and they're taking things, like, matters into their own hands. And I totally understand why. But so it's beneficial to Black and brown kids, because, yeah, they have that opportunity to just have that foundational education that's going to affirm their self love and self esteem. And they're gonna get that by hearing decolonized stories, right? I would love to see in our schools the same amount of, you know, momentum that we're having for talking about the hard things as talking about the heroes and the contributions, right. So we just put our second issue of Ditto Kids out, and I was so excited because I went much harder on the decolonized stories on this issue versus the first one while we were really laying some foundational definitions, etc. And we talked about Mali, the West African country, its history, its current culture, and I've just had a fabulous time researching and learning about it myself. Because I have never heard a single thing about African history in school. You never like, through the end of college, nobody talks about the history of an entire continent. Unless it's in the context of white colonizer. And it's awful, because like, you know, you even hear things you learned like about the Aztec and the Mayan civilizations, which is great. You learned about Ancient China, also awesome. So you're learning about, you know, all these other cultures and peoples and races from around the world, but not a single peep about Africa. So damaging to Black kids.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:57

Yes, and I feel like, unless you're talking about it from a deficit mindset, right? Poor, those poor African children that we need to save and all of these really unhealthy storylines that children are fed about what living in Africa is like, and what the experiences of the people there are, which is so monolithic, considering it's an entire continent that's massive.

A Alex Scott 23:23

With so many countries and cultures, yes. 100%. You know, like, if it is talked about, it's in the, just like you said, it's kind of from this perspective of lack and having less resources. And that's not really the case. It's that those resources have been exploited. It's actually an incredibly resource rich place, both in terms of you know, you know, raw resources like minerals and whatnot and human capital. So much knowledge there. So, skipping, that, leaving that out, that like this information out of all of a child's education has, you know, it just has huge implications for their self love and self esteem. Children need those stories, and they need to be able to see

themselves in you know, in greatness, which exists. So, the great thing about, you know, teaching, you know, giving your kids an anti-racist education at home with other kids of color is you can really focus on this and you can do it in an order where you know you're really hitting on the self love hard first and those stories, so that your child has this like their, their well is like filled up and they're ready to move on to the next step.

A Alex Scott 24:46

And for white kids, it's also very important because they can have the opportunity to have that firm foundation in practicing seeing and loving others. That is not to say that white kids don't need practice seeing and loving themselves, they just have more opportunities to do that. So they really need to like hit the road when it comes to practicing seeing and loving others. And that's something that parents can really work with them on at home. So education, whether it's at school or at home, it just really, it does vastly underserve kids by serially emitting these stories. And by only learning about Black and brown people in the context of like, struggle and white gaze, so yes, just it's, there's, there's so much to do, you know, and the order that you do it is so important. And I've had this conversation with a lot of girlfriends of mine who are Black and have kids at home just like me, because we know how damaging it is to be like, "All right kids, like time to go to school," and then like, boom, it's only conversation about civil rights, and boom, it's only conversations that slavery, and the only books they read where they see Black children are ones about struggle. So I would love love to see this, like, mass change in the classroom, but that's going to take a while. So, you know, I think the time is really now for parents to take advantage of, you know, the opportunity to give their kids a foundation at home.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:27

Yes, thank you. Thank you for going into that. And I think something that I heard you say that I want to flesh out a little more is this idea of decolonized stories. So if parents are looking for decolonized stories to share with their children, what do you think are some of the characteristics of a decolonized story?

A Alex Scott 26:48

Oh, that's such a great question. I would say, some of the characteristics of a decolonized story, so it would be stories that center Black and brown figures and voices, stories were that are not told from the perspective of Europeans. Basically, where white people's stories, where they're not revolving around the perspective, or the events that are, that were like, put into place by white people. Yeah, that's how that's how I would define that.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 27:25

Thank you. That is such great clarification.

A Alex Scott 27:29

And you know, I had one more thought about, you know, the differences in the classroom versus home and the differences for children of color versus white kids when it comes to, you know, their education. I think when it comes to getting things going in the classroom, it really needs to be a teacher-caregiver partnership that's going on, especially when you're working with kids in the like three-through-six, three-through-seven set. Because teachers are, I know they have classrooms of 25. They're teaching to like a lot of kids, but there's a very good chance that that teacher has a child of color in her classroom who has a fear, or a phobia, or who has experienced, you know, a personal race-related trauma already. That is completely...unfortunately, it is very, very normal. And the teacher needs to know that so that he or she can pace things and lead the conversation in a way that is respecting every child in the classroom.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 28:37

I love that you bring that up. And I'm wondering how do parents start that conversation with the teacher? What does the beginning of that partnership look like?

A Alex Scott 28:45

Yeah, so. So that's a really good question. Teachers, they work so hard. I mean, I've been a teacher. My dad is a middle school teacher, my grandmother was a teacher. Teachers are doing a next-to-impossible job. I grew up seeing my dad wake up at 3:30am to work on IEPs and helping him grade in the afternoon when I was done with playing sports and homework and all that stuff. I think that teachers that are generally supported both in their school and in their classroom are more likely to have the time and space to even consider, you know, working with you more to give your child the kind of anti-bias and anti-racist education they need in their classroom and all the children in general. So, thinking about a teacher support, which I think is honestly the best place to start, I have so much respect for teachers, especially this past year. I've watched like, my daughter's teacher, she's been in virtual kindergarten and she's just been a champion. I cannot even begin to imagine the challenges of being... Like this woman is like almost 60, my daughter's in French immersion, she's teaching like 27 kids in kindergarten in a language most of them have never heard for the first time and having to flex on all this technology challenges. They're amazing. So I feel like, you know, if we view ourselves as parents, as you know, people or caregivers, people who are in partnership with our teachers, we're going to be able to have more fertile soil to introduce that conversation. So let's get them support so that we can get the ball rolling and so that they're happy and everybody's happy. Chances are they might not have loads of flexibility in their schedule, with like, what and how they're required to teach. So I know that I think one of the most effective ways is instead of like, having a lot of individual requests is to, you know, form like a parent action committee within the PTA. And then you can, you know, get the ball rolling for them. You can raise money for funding, for trainings. You can, you know, put together additional educational initiatives, you can be doing the research on finding the curriculum and how they intersect with the curriculum that the teachers are already required to teach, and raising money to pay for those. Raising funds to slowly overhaul their classroom libraries or school libraries. So I think like, and then like coordinating with their boss, right, the administration so that these things can be something that's more fully like a part of your child's school.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:36

Yes,

A Alex Scott 31:37

I think that's the best way to work with teachers, because I think, I think most teachers, they just want what's best for the kids. And I think, you know, like, the whole reason, like I talked about earlier, why I started Ditto Kids, it's because it takes an enormous amount of research to put together a curriculum, that's anti-bias anti-racism in the correct way. Teachers don't have that. So we need to be a partner with them, and really support them so that we can get things rolling.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:10

Yes, I love how you pointed out that we are on the same team. And we all want the same thing, for our children to thrive and succeed and respect one another. And I think one of the things that I would add is that that's the perfect place for Ditto Kids to come in is that it is a curriculum in your hands. It's a physical curriculum that you can give to your child's teacher and say, "Hey, how can I work with you to incorporate this in these conversations in your classroom?":

A Alex Scott 32:39

Yes, 100% I've, I've donated copies to like my kids school, and my kids preschool just to be like, you know, we're here, like, let me help you. Because this is this is an uphill battle. And like, this is a hill that 99% of us, especially the teachers want to climb, but we just need to, to help each other. You know, I'm sure there are some teachers who do not want to climb that hill. And that's a whole different conversation. But that can be a good place. That maybe that's maybe you start more with getting funding for training for those teachers, you know, and for that school community.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 33:26

Yeah, just taking a pulse of where are you at? And where's your child's teacher at? And I know, I mean, you mentioned you are a teacher. So as I and I really did not have the space or the energy for anything extra. I was out of the classroom and that's when I started getting into, "Okay, how can I make my teaching or my, you know, my parenting, more anti-racist and more inclusive and all of those things." So I'm so glad that you pointed that out that we, those of us who are parents who have the privilege of time need to be spending that time to support our teachers, if this is what we want to see in our classrooms.

 34:04

100 percent. Yes.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 34:06

Well, one of the other things that I really try to help parents understand is that anti racism is not one big conversation where you sit down at the table and say, Okay, now we're gonna talk about anti-racism. It's just a million little things that happened throughout each day. So what are some ways that you've been able to incorporate anti-racism into your everyday life?

A

Alex Scott 34:30

Yeah. So I love that question. Just because, you know, my oldest is six. Sometimes we just marvel at how much our kids forget. They've gotten older. We're like, "Oh, do you remember that super amazing, fun time where we did this crazy cool thing?" They're like, "No, I don't remember that." "Do you remember would you had cake on your birthday?" "Oh, yes. I remember my cake from like four years ago."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 34:56

Okay. That's hilarious.

A

Alex Scott 34:58

Yeah, kids are so funny. I just thought. so, you know, I think like, whatever we're trying to instill values in our kids, it's just like you said, it's not one big conversation. It's a conversation that we have over and over again, like, you're not going to tell your kid to be honest once, or you're not going to tell your kid to brush their teeth just once and be like, "Okay, I'm sure you're gonna brush those teeth, right?" You're talking about that with them every day. Sometimes multiple, you know, sometimes, like three times a day, because maybe you told him to do it in the morning and they forgot and you're like, "Okay, it's noon, go brush your teeth." But there's so many opportunities for this. I think one of the first things that parents could do would be to take a look at their schedule of activities and their community. What does it look like? You know, what, what museums, community culture events do they attend, if any, right? What does their congregation look like and their school and their neighborhood. And a big one is, who are who are they inviting into their homes? Who's in that, like, close kind of circle. And I think this is a big one, because a lot of people, they take an edit of who's in their inner circle, the biggest majority of people are those who have the same like race or background, or that they most closely identify with. And this is going to be even more the case for white families. And so if your life experience is, you know, more rooted in diversity, then these conversations are naturally going to come up if you're listening. And so I would say pay close attention to what your kids are saying, which is hard when you have like a bunch of kids. But like, if you listen to them, especially if you take a step back and are just like mindfully kind of watching their play, and keeping an ear out for the conversation that they're having with each other while they play at what they're doing, it will present you with so many opportunities. Kids, they spend a lot of time trying to make sense of this world. And they do that by trying to put people in categories in ways that are connected to race and money and physical and mental health and gender and hair length and clothing. And just like everything, you know, and they start doing that so young: two, three.

A

Alex Scott 37:31

And so as a little example, hair length, right? Kids like my kids, for some reason, they just love love to cling to this idea that being a woman means having long hair and being a man means having short hair. We've like been pushing against that with them for years. So I showed them pictures of when I had hair that was like an inch long. And my my husband, their dad right now has grown out his hair during the pandemic at his shoulder length. And like you know, like, when we were like divvying up toothbrushes, we make sure that he has the pink one and I get the blue one from the pack or whatever, and in our relationships with people and like, just like, what we're modeling, myself being Black and him being white. And then what they see in like books or shows or museums, we're always trying to show them people of color, in a range of clothing and places and jobs, and family situations and housing. And trying to set those examples of course, ourselves. So it's just like everything we're doing is trying to contradict the stereotypes that the world is trying to feed them. Because the world is constantly feeding them those things. And so, you know, yeah, just like paying close attention to like your kids to what they're saying in their play, how they're structuring their play. And what they say to you and what they're saying to their siblings and jumping in. And being like, "You know what, I wanna, I want to tell you a little something," and it doesn't, when you have this conversation with your kids like do not make it this like huge long thing every time. Like do not launch into this like lecture that's like a diatribe or this like long thing, which I am so long winded and I really like I have to like back myself up and like, okay, "Alex, just make it short because it feels like a chore for them, especially if you're interrupting their play." And you wonder, like every child has a different attention span. And you want to respect that, like the general rule is they have a minute for whatever age they are. So if it's a three year old, you get like two or three minutes, right? And so, you know, like I mentioned, this is why I started Ditto Kids, to help parents and educators have this opportunity to have all these little conversations with their kids, but have it accompanied with the visuals and the stories that they need along with it.

A

Alex Scott 39:58

Life is just so busy as parents, especially if you're in a country like the United States, where there's so little support for mothers and fathers, and there are things we want to teach our children so much, but we have, you know, a time or financial budget. And so you know, the magazine is really, it's like a wagon, a resource, to give you this extra help in a way that's more streamlined and sustainable.

A

Alex Scott 40:22

And one of the things that's going to help you with these conversations is the way it's written. It's written in, your in, like the voice of a caregiver, speaking to a child, right. So it's not written in the voice of a children's book, which I feel like are generally a little more poetic. It's written just the way you would talk. So as you're, you know, if you go through which I'd encourage you to go through and read through it yourself first, it should sound like exactly what you would be saying. And that's going to give you the opportunity to, as you're reading it to yourself and to your child, to like, model what having these conversations looks like, for, for you, with your

kids, and give you the practice to do it so that you can become a little more fluid with it with a script. And so you'll be more prepared to do it when you don't have a script and your child, you know, you're noticing that they're saying something in their play, or whatever it is,

J Jasmine Bradshaw 41:17

Yeah, you're you're so right. I, I hadn't noticed that. But it really is a conversation framework, so that you can say these things out loud and have these conversations together. And I love that you pointed out the balance of noticing when your kids are playing and when you're hearing things and jumping in and then also creating intentional opportunities for conversation. I think that balance is so important. And it makes me think of just a couple of weeks ago, I was sharing on Instagram, we have these little, like, people that you build, and they have a head and like a shirt part. And then like pants or a skirt. And when Violet was really little, she would just put any three pieces together. And I was like, "Oh yeah, this is perfect." And I thought, "Hey, I wonder what she would do if I took, you know, one of the characters that have short hair, and put a skirt with it." And so I did that and said, "Here you go. Here's one that I made." And she goes, "Mom, boys don't wear skirts."

A Alex Scott 42:20

Haha. You're like it's starting?

A Alex Scott 42:22

Yes. And so I said, "Oh, you know what, remember how we talked about you can't tell if someone is a boy or a girl just by looking at them." And so she's like, "Oh, yeah, I remember that." And then I said, "And boys can wear skirts if they want to. Anybody can wear a skirt." So it was a really great two-fold opportunity where I was seeing, you know, what will she say when I put this intentional conversation into our interaction. And it was just a perfect little opportunity for me to remind her of our values as a family and what we what we believe and how we treat other people, and then we moved on and continued to play. So it really is that balance, like you were saying of listening to what they're saying when they're on their own, and then putting yourself in there and saying, "Okay, let's have this conversation, you know, in this little creative way." So thank you for sharing that.

A Alex Scott 43:10

Yes, definitely. And like, I am also a big fan of the importance of really setting the stage for your children's play for those ideas. And, you know, to come about, like you were saying you have these little dolls you put together. I am a big fan of like Potato Heads. You know, we've had Potato Heads forever, because it gives the kids the flexibility to put them together in any way they want. And yeah, if one says like, "Oh, you know, that's a girl; you've got to put a skirt on her." It's like, "No, that's not what's happening. Anybody can wear anything." And then also just setting the stage for their play in terms of the kind of other toys they have, like we have baby dolls of, you know, a lot of different races and shades of skin and hair textures. And just using open-ended toys so that they can, you know, come more from a place of creation and

less from a place of dictation in their play. And it gives them more flexibility to create a world that is to create the world that we're all hoping for, where we don't have where we don't have these kinds of, you know, stereotypes and -isms.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:26

Yeah, yes. Where people can be fully themselves like what we are hoping for for all of our children.

A Alex Scott 44:33

Right? Definitely. Yes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:37

Well, Alex, thank you so much. Every time we talk I learn so much from you. And I'm just so grateful to you for your work.

A Alex Scott 44:42

I learned so much from you, too.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:46

Yes. For your work and your wisdom. It's so wonderful.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:51

I feel like I say this after every interview, but isn't she amazing? It's true, though. It's true. She's amazing. She has so much wisdom. I was taking so many notes because every time I talk to her I'm like, "Oh, yeah, I just love the way you said that, I love the way you put that. And thank you for putting that in concrete terms." It's just...she's so fantastic. And all of that wisdom is inside Ditto Kids. She puts it in language that is perfect for kiddos. And she just really does a great job of working things in a way that is compassionate. And that is age-appropriate. It is so fantastic. So head to the show notes if you want to get your hands on an issue of Ditto Kids magazine. I promise you, you will love it.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 45:38

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you and how deeply I know that when we work together, we can make real change in our communities. Any of the books, podcasts, or articles that I reference will be linked in the show notes. If you are looking for more detailed notes, be sure to head over to our Patreon community. On our

Patreon site I provide all of the outlines that I use to make the episodes and everything is linked there so you don't have to take furious notes while you are listening. And don't forget to join us over on Instagram @firstname.basis. If you're interested in partnering with First Name Basis or doing some kind of collaboration, please email us at hello @firstnamebasis.org. All right, have a great week my friends and I will talk to you again soon.