

6.12 Summer School: When to Engage on Social Media

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Carter Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Six, Episode 12: "How Can I Show Up on Social Media When I Don't Have All of the Answers?" Hello, First Name Basis fam, and welcome to Summer School! Summer School is a series where I will share tips and tidbits that you can be thinking about this summer when it comes to anti-racism. I know that summer is so busy and so fun, and I want you to have everything you need to continue along your anti-racist journey this summer. So some of these tips will be for you "the grownups" and some of them will be for your kiddos, for your students, for any of the children in your life that you want to talk to about race, racism and anti-racism. So let's get our summer on and learn together in Summer School.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:02

Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. Guess what. Guess what! We are finally East Coasters! We are in Maryland; we are settling in to our home. I should not even say that; I should not say settling in. I should say we are living in a little bit of a lot of chaos right now. Unpacking is rough, there is stuff everywhere. And we left so much of our furniture back in Arizona. We donated it and gave it to people that we love. And so we're kind of starting from scratch, like my mattress is on the floor. I have just ordered some dining room chairs from Target. It is going that way for us. But we're so excited to be here. I'm so grateful for all of your support along the way. I've heard from so many of you as we were on our 10-day "yes, you heard that right, 10-day" road trip with our two little girls. It was so fun. And I am also really happy to be sleeping on my own mattress again.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:05

Today, we are continuing with our Summer School series. And I know that my friends back in AZ, you already have kids in school. So you're like, "Summer School? What in the world?" But here in my new digs on the East Coast, we don't start school until after Labor Day. So what's still

here in my new digs on the East Coast, we don't start school until after Labor Day. So we've still got a few weeks of summer. And so I'm bringing you a couple more Summer School episodes to round out your summer vacation, your summer enjoyment. And today we're talking about social media. So one of the most common questions that I've gotten over the course of the three, almost three years, that we've been doing First Name Basis is how do I know when to show up on social media? How do I know if it's actually making a difference or if it's just kind of causing a ruckus for no reason? Is it worth it to engage people on social media when I see stuff that I disagree with or I see stuff that is unfair or unjust? What is the criteria, like, what makes it really worth it to engage with people when I know it might not go the way I want it to? Or maybe it's someone that you haven't talked to in 10 years, maybe you went to high school together, but you don't really know them " what is worth it?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:11

So for the body of this episode, you will hear a Q&A session from our Patreon community. And if you're not sure, Patreon is a place where you can support First Name Basis. I'm sure if you're already listening you know how important this work is to our families and to our community. And so those listeners who are really invested in this work support us over on Patreon. It's patreon.com/firstnamebasis. I'll be sure to leave the link in the show notes. But every month we do a Q&A or we do a Policy Party. And so this is from one of our monthly Q&A days. It was a question that we got and were able to answer with our Patreon friends, with our First Name Basis family. So that is what you're hearing, the Patreon Q&A answering this question about social media and showing up on social media when things in the news are showing injustice or things in your community are unjust and you would like to make them more fair.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:10

"The last episode on spiritual bypassing really got me thinking about calling out slash calling in certain comments I'm seeing on social media right now. I know I have friends who have different views than me, but I can't help calling out slash in when I see completely inaccurate facts shared. That's a good thing, right? This of course leads to debates, which are not my favorite thing with tons of family and friends following along online. Do you have any advice for handling these social media debates? Do ignore them or get involved?"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:42

And Carter is going to take this first one because his social media looks a lot different than mine, and I think it probably looks a lot more like yours, so he's more of an expert in this area.

C Carter Bradshaw 04:54

Yes, I'm a master Facebook debater. Just kidding. No, that's not my favorite thing either. I don't...I'm a lawyer, but I don't look for contention. I don't look for opportunities to fight with people, but they're around. And I had one recently that I think I'll use as an example. Basically the short answer to your question saying, "Do you ignore it or get involved?" The short answer is you get involved. It's good to speak up, it's good to be that voice. It's important to be that

voice. Because? Well, there's a few reasons that I'll get to in a minute. So I would say default to that, yes, get involved, speak up. It's important, even though it's not comfortable, even though it sometimes leads to contention. I'm not saying that you have to be mean about it. But I do think it's important to say something, to be that voice that maybe they're not expecting. Maybe they have a Facebook friend group that largely looks like them and thinks like them, and for you to be the one to say, "Hey, wait a minute. That might not be correct," especially when you know that they're factually incorrect. Oh, that's so frustrating. Yeah, it's really important, because it makes them think twice. So I'd say usually get involved, however, do pick your battles, you can't get involved every single time right?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:06
No.

C Carter Bradshaw 06:07
If you did...

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:07
...you'd just be spending all day on social media fighting with people,

C Carter Bradshaw 06:11
It could be the rest of your life. So you pick your battles, you figure out which one is going to be productive. But how do you decide that? I think that's what's really important.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:20
Yeah.

C Carter Bradshaw 06:21
For me, how I've been handling it is a couple of a couple of things to think about. First of all, what's the relationship that you have with this person? I recently had a pretty lengthy back and forth that spanned a few days or a week with a good friend of mine from high school. We haven't remained close since high school, but at the time, we were really close. I know that we think highly of each other, I know that we respect each other, I know I have his respect. For that reason, I thought, me speaking up isn't going to be just as some crazy you-know-what thinks this, it's going to be "Oh, this kid that I know and respect thinks this." That's going to make a difference for him. So I thought it's going to be important for me to speak up this time to say something. So based on your relationship, I think that's a really important thing to consider.

C Carter Bradshaw 07:05

A second thing that I consider and I don't even know if this is correct, so maybe, maybe you can correct me. Sometimes if someone posts something really offensive, and it has no likes and no comments, even if I know it's factually 100% wrong, I will ignore it, because I think that's the treatment that it deserves. If I comment and someone else jumps on and comments, and then the algorithm picks it up, and starts putting it on everyone's newsfeed, have I just done a disservice by drawing attention to this thing when it would have otherwise been ignored? That's a strategy that I use if it has zero or one or two likes, I think, "Well, that's what it deserves." And I just leave it alone.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:44

Yeah, we've talked about how that like, lack of likes and lack of comments, like sends a message to that person that what they're saying is either not true or not important to anybody else.

C Carter Bradshaw 07:54

That's one thing I think about. And the last thing I'll say on that is basically, going back to this example with my friend, so he posted basically, yeah, it was a quote from somebody, a political commentator, who said, "We're not really racist, because we ended slavery and because all these things are basically things of the past. We've done so many good things for racial progress." And so I tried to explain it to him. I was as kind and as loving as I could be, but I felt the frustration. It was tense. We went back and forth a few times. I explained, "Here's why that's not okay." He pushed back at me, we went back and forth. I don't know if I made any dent in the way that he thinks. He never came on and said, "Oh, thanks so much, buddy. You really changed my life and my outlook." None of that. And I still feel really good about it. I'm still really glad I spoke up because like I said, I might be the only voice that was going to push back. It turns out, I wasn't. After I spoke up, a handful of other people got on and started to explain what they thought. And that was encouraging. But I think you can exhibit leadership when you do that. There may be other people thinking that and not wanting to speak up, and then you say something, and it gives them the courage to speak up as well and say, "Oh, yeah, that's what I think too." So that's important. And whether or not I changed my friend's mind, like I said, I planted a seed. And next time he's inclined to post something like that he's gonna know, "Oh boy, Carter is gonna see this. And I'm going to have to defend it. And if it doesn't hold up, I should think twice about that."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:32

Rachel says, "Something that I sometimes think about is that people are reading the comments. So if you speak up and explain in the comments, you may be teaching people who are reading but not engaging." Yes, that's so true, because Carter actually received a couple of messages from people who he hasn't talked to in a long time that were like, "Thank you for saying that. I'm really I was really happy to read that," which it would be nice if those people said that in public instead of sending him a direct message, but like that's the first step, right?

Just somebody saying, like, "I saw this, and this was important to me," like you never know next time they might finally be willing to say something in public. So yeah, I love that. Thank you for sharing that.

C Carter Bradshaw 10:10

Last, well, we'll probably come back to this later.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:13

Yeah, and you can share it with them next. The next question is really, really similar. It says, "I'm feeling confused about speaking. I see lots of posts on Facebook where my friends and relatives will post a video or article that denies systemic racism. I see them posting videos of Black people who deny racism, I find myself getting all wound up trying to speak up, because I'm told I should do it every time I see or hear racist ideas or comments, or maybe I'm wasting my time." So these questions go hand in hand. No, you're not wasting your time. We gave you a few guidelines to be thinking about "don't spend all of your time on social media, like some of this stuff does need to happen in real life conversations" but it is not a waste of time, when you are going to be that, especially if you're going to be the lone voice, like you need to say something, because a lot of people are speaking into an echo chamber. And that's a huge problem that we have, like in our communities at large, just across the United States. And I feel like that's kind of one of the biggest problems with that's how we get into these situations is that everybody is talking to people who agree with them and nobody's speaking up against that. And nobody has an opportunity to hear a different point of view. So if it's somebody that you know, and that you know trusts you, like, it's so important that you use your voice in that space. And it makes me think of Martin Luther King. He has this quote, and I've shared it before on the podcast, but he talks about agitating. And I always think about that. He says freedom only comes through persistent revolt, persistent agitation, persistently rising up against a system of evil. So it's that like constant, like, the agitation is what sticks out to me, because it's like, the idea that you are always going to be there. And they're probably going to think of you the next time that they're doing one of those posts, and they're gonna know that like, "Oh, this is not going to be comfortable for me to continue to post these racist things, or to continue to post these untrue facts, like there are going to be people who are out there holding me accountable and making it uncomfortable."

C Carter Bradshaw 12:08

Yeah, make people uncomfortable. We're really good at that.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 12:13

Yes, but in a nice way. It can be discouraging when they say you will never change their mind to this. Yes, it can be keep directing people to the research, because the the reality is that there's a huge body of research out there. And a lot of people that you're following that are sharing this research, like activists and educators, they are going to give you kind of the tools and you can just keep pointing people back to that. And the thing about it is, I know that people

say that you will never change their mind. But like Carter was saying plant the seed, because you never know what's going to come of it. I can tell you, I won't because we don't have time, but I can tell you stories of people who I can't believe their mind has been changed, like, and to get the text that I've gotten in the past month from people who I like, haven't talked to in years that are like, "I've just listened to your podcast. And now I think this way," it's, it's insane to me. So don't discount yourself and your voice because you never know what's going to come of that seed that you're planting.

C Carter Bradshaw 13:16

I totally relate to the discouragement. And the truth is that there are people who will not change their minds. That's true. That's just the truth. It will always be. But there are people who will. That's why we have hope. That's why we keep fighting the fight.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 13:29

Yeah, yeah. Okay. "What is your opinion on speaking up imperfectly versus avoiding getting involved in the conversation? I'm still learning tons. And I know there's a point where learning is procrastination. But I also have seen for many people on social media to amplify Black and Indigenous people of color and their voices, and don't make it all about you and leave the conversation to the people who are educated enough to know what they're talking about." Such a good question.

C Carter Bradshaw 13:57

Yeah, fantastic question. The way I would answer that is, ask yourself what your motivation is behind staying quiet. There are times to speak up, there are times to not. But ask yourself, what is motivating you to make that decision? Not knowing enough and being afraid of saying the wrong thing, those are two different things, okay? Recognizing, saying, "Okay, I don't I don't have enough education on this topic. I can't really cite a source or, or explain from personal experience what, what the answer to this question is," that's one thing. But it's another thing to say, "Oh, I heard so and so say this is I think it's relevant. But I'm afraid if I say it, I'll get some backlash," that kind of makes it about you. So so that's something you need to be careful of. If you're really motivated to make progress, it can't be about you. It needs to be about the people that you're trying to serve.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:47

And I think not knowing enough is just a feeling that we are always all going to have. Like I feel like I don't know enough because it's a journey; it's a lifelong journey that you're now on. So even though I know a lot, like I still, all the time, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I don't know enough, I don't know enough to say all of this." And when you look back, you'll be able to see how much you really do know, especially for those people that you're talking to and pushing back on, like, they're probably in a space where they're at the very beginning of this journey, and you're a little bit further along the path, and you're just helping to show them. So I think that's really important. The other thing to consider is like, like we were saying social media versus real life,

like in so on social media, like, you can definitely be amplifying people's voices and pointing people to activists and all those types of things. But in real life, a lot of these conversations are going to happen at Sunday dinner, or your family barbecue, places that like you're not going to be able to turn to a person of color and be like, you know, "I want to amplify your voice here," because people of color aren't going to be there. Right? Unless you're in our family, like, and I'm there. But does that make sense? So it's like, if you are the, if you're standing in a circle of white people, and that's the other thing is that a lot of white people say their most racist things like not in front of me, they're gonna say in front of other white people. So we need white people to, to stand up and be able to be that voice when people of color don't have access to those situations, you know. I'm not going to be at your Sunday dinner, which is fine. Like, that's not a big deal. But you need to be that voice at Sunday dinner when something happens. And I know it is so hard, especially when it's your family, like we have been in that situation a lot of times. And I think the biggest thing that we tell ourselves is that like, we know their hearts, and we know their values. And we are just helping them hold true to what they value when we are calling them in and inviting them to learn more.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 16:46

All right, I hope you are enjoying our Summer School series. We actually have one more Summer School episode left. And it's been so fun to go on this journey together to enjoy the summer and to be learning together. So I hope you're loving it. We've got one more episode for you. But if you're already in school, enjoy that back to school buzz. I always love that time of year, especially as a teacher it was like, anxious but excited. And so many of you have kiddos going to kindergarten. I'm sending you all of my love. My Violet has one more year of preschool before she hits kindergarten. And I'm a little nervous for that day. I know it will be great for her. But for me, I'm like how did this happen? So sending you all the love, all of the support. And if you are like me and you're still celebrating summer, hang in there for one more Summer School episode because we are so excited to share it with you.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 17:35

Thanks for listening to Summer School. I hope you're having the best summer ever. And you know what would make a fantastic summer activity? Bite-Sized Black History. Bite-Sized Black History is our program that we created just for you so that you and your children can learn about amazing people from Black history. We have created 24 different bite-sized podcast episodes about different amazing people from Black history. So just go to firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory and you can invest in Bite-Sized Black History for your family on your summer road trip. How perfect would that be? All right, love y'all. I'll talk to you soon.