

6.13 Summer School: Helping Kids with Hard History

Thu, 8/18 10:34AM 16:05

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, history, white, children, founding fathers, summer, whiteness, first name basis, teaching, black, season, slavery, family, pride, wrong, abolitionists, essay, thinking, read, question

SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Carter Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Six, Episode 13: "How Can I Help My Kiddos Grapple with Hard History." 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 01:00

Hello, First Name Basis, fam. I am so glad you are here. And I'm a little bit sad, because that is one of the last times you'll hear our fun Summer School intro, because this is our last Summer School episode. But that means that we are gearing up for Season Seven. So it's like a happy, sad, bittersweet type of thing. So today, in our last Summer School episode, we are talking about hard history. And we are talking about how to help our children cling to our family values and continue to live our values, even when they are learning hard, ugly things that people have done and said throughout history.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:42

One of the things that can be really tough for our children is when they almost feel like they've been swindled. Like they've had a teacher who has taught them about a historical figure and has only taught them positive things or things that they view as positive things, and then they get home or they get to the next grade and they learn some tough, sticky, tricky things about this historical figure. They get frustrated, and they can feel confused, and they can feel angry and hurt. And all of those big emotions are totally normal, and totally okay, and totally

welcome. But we want to make sure that while they are holding those big emotions and grappling with this hard history, they're still sticking to our family values and treating each other and other people with respect. And you'll hear what I mean when you hear the question that was asked that prompted this episode.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:39

So like many of our Summer School episodes, this is a clip that we pulled from one of our past Patreon Q&A sessions. And this is where we get together as a community on Patreon, and my husband Carter and I answer any questions that anyone has about anti-racism about their journey, about something that they've seen in their family or in their community. We talk about it together, it really is one of my favorite things. So if that is something that you're interested in, go to the shownotes. I left a link for our Patreon and you can support First Name Basis there, as well as be involved in these Q & As and Policy Parties and all these other fun things that we have going on there.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:15

But before we hit play on that question, I want to tell you that Season Seven is in just a couple of weeks. The first episode of Season Seven will be out on August 30, which is super soon, and I can't wait to share it with you. We are digging into some interesting things about the news and misinformation, so you'll want to stick around for that. But please enjoy this last Summer School episode before we jump into Season Seven at the end of August.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:47

Oh, this is a really good one that I feel like a lot of you might relate to. "My sister and I had a conversation today about the Founding Fathers. Her son is reading the youth version of the book "Stamped" by Kendi and Reynolds for school. She was so upset by her son's essay declaring President Lincoln as a jerk. She is very upset by what she sees as a trending rhetoric that the Founding Fathers were terrible people because they owned slaves. Her main issue is that current morals should not be transposed onto old times, that it isn't fair to say that they weren't good, that it's ignoring that they struggled internally with slavery despite owning people. I didn't give much of a response because I'm still thinking about it. What is your take?"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:29

So when we first read over this question, my first instinct was to help her son, help your nephew, I guess, realize that name calling is something that is not a good value and something that we don't do. I mean, as a family, we agree that we don't name call and so that would be my first step is "Okay, I see that your essay says that President Lincoln is a jerk and that's not something that we do in our family." You know, if you're going to have that value, you also have to hold yourself to it. So and I think that during this tough political climate, there is a lot of name calling going on. So if we're going to ask our children to do something, we have to be able to do it ourselves. And you can even say, "You know, I haven't lived up to that until now,

but reading your essay made me realize that's a value that we want to have as a family. And I'm going to, I want you, to hold me accountable to we're not going to call names." So that's where I would start with that.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:19

The other thing that I would really emphasize is that we really need to reevaluate the way that we're teaching history. History is taught in terms of heroes and villains, and in terms of winners and losers, and it's very black and white, right? So her nephew is probably, she or he read Abraham Lincoln as a hero for his whole life, right? And now he's learning more about Abraham Lincoln, a more complete picture of who he was, and he's in this black and white thinking of history is made up of heroes and villains. So he moved Abraham Lincoln from the hero category into the villain category. And I think that that's the problem with the way that we're teaching our children about historical figures. We need to help them understand that these people are people, complete total people, people who do good things and people who do bad things. And so it's, Abraham Lincoln, was he a jerk? Well, we don't call names, but did he act in a racist way? Absolutely. Did he do things to also support the Black community? Absolutely. So we need to be painting a full picture of our Founding Fathers. But I also want to point out, and we talked about this a lot, that there is no "old morals" and "new morals." Wrong is wrong, and slavery was always wrong, it will always be wrong. Just because it was socially acceptable does not mean that it wasn't wrong. So for her to say that they are being held to today's standards of morality, it's just, there is no difference. Today's standards of morality are the same as they were back in when the Founding Fathers were enslaving people. Slavery has always been wrong.

C Carter Bradshaw 07:07

That's a really important lesson that I think we definitely want to instill that in our kids. There is such a thing as trends, there is such a thing as fashion, right? Things go in and out of fashion. I don't know all the ins and outs of the culture back in Abraham Lincoln's time. I know things were different. I understand that. But morality hasn't changed from that time to this. And when we fall into that trap, I think it gives us an unfair excuse to do things that are wrong because they're popular. And that's the opposite of what we want to teach our kids, right? Nobody teaches their kids just go with the crowd and do what's comfortable. Nobody says that. But you're kind of giving them that pass and saying, "Well, it was comfortable at that time. And a lot of people thought it was okay, so whatever." No, there were a lot of people at that time as well who were very adamant that slavery was wrong. They were always abolitionists. And you can look at some of that history, you can look at it. I'm blanking on his name, it's...Garrison. William Lloyd Garrison. Anyway, there are lots of famous abolitionists you could look at, but also think about the people who were enslaved. Right? Weren't every single one of them abolitionist? If you had bothered to listen to them wouldn't you have known that slavery was wrong? You could have! They had consciences, right?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:24

And there are lots of quotes from the Founding Fathers talking about "and your your sister obviously acknowledged that " she said that there are lots of quotes acknowledging that it was wrong. And so I think that it's important to point out to your children, "Okay, they

acknowledged that it was wrong, but they did it anyway. And we have a choice to make. We, when we know that something is wrong, or we have an important choice to make, are we going to go with what's socially acceptable? Like, I don't know if it's Marissa or Marissa. But yes, she was probably meaning what was socially acceptable? Are we going to go with what's socially acceptable? Are we going to stand up for our values and what we believe in? So do I think that the Founding Fathers need to be you know, slandered and smeared? Absolutely not. I think that we need to paint a full picture of who they are and what they did. And I think that it's, what's hard, is that we attach so much of our identity to them, and "not me, but I'm assuming white people do that" and so I think that that's why it's so hard to see, you know, what they did as hard and wrong.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:37

"Okay, history. I have listened to most of your podcasts. One comment I found very intriguing was when you discuss not liking Black history in school yourself because it made you stand out, and your dad brilliantly suggested bringing in examples of history to be proud of. I had heard several comments from white peers in the last month along the lines of quote, 'I feel like I can't be proud of who I am.' This is wrong and may sound pathetic, but white history worldwide is not easy either. Honestly, I never liked most history because it's full of terrible evil produced primarily by whites, i.e. people that look like me. Which is probably why a lot of people grow up to ignore the subject altogether. So my question is, how can hard history be presented to young white children in a way where they can separate themselves from the evils in the past and be the change and still be proud of who they are." So my first response to what she was saying was, I feel like a lot of children, and people in general, are trying to have pride in their whiteness, when that is not the place where you need to be placing your pride. Like your pride should be in your heritage and your culture, and all of that is completely separated from being white. You are obviously, you're white, according to like social categorization, but more you are Irish, or you're Scottish or you're English or you're Welsh. Those are all the things that I am, right? So I think when we're thinking about like building pride in our children because of their heritage, it needs to be those types of things instead of building pride in them because of their whiteness. And I read an article about how teaching children about their genealogy and their family history helps build their sense of self. So that's the first piece of it is that like, helping your kids understand that they are something besides being white, and that they can totally have pride in those things. And because, like one of the functions of white supremacy is making people believe that in their whiteness, and in order for like me to be Black and me to have lesser like, you have to believe in buying into that whiteness.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:48

Kelsey says, "I think in white fragility, she mentioned something about teaching about white allies during Black History Month." Yes, that's exactly where I was going, Kelsey, to give better examples to white children. Is that taking the focus away from Black history? No. So Robyn D'Angelo says in her book, and there's another white anti-racist educator named Tim Wise, who has been around forever. And he gives like a kind of a formula for like teaching children about like civil rights, or slavery or anything that's really hard that you, where you see, like people of color being oppressed, and white people being the oppressors. And he talks about the first thing that you do is like, tell, just like, tell them the story, and help them understand, like, "What happened?" And then you need to ask the children like, "What would you do? Like, what

would you do in this situation if you were alive, you know, during that time? What would you do if you saw something happening to Rosa Parks? What would you do, you know, back if you lived in the enslavement era?" and help and like, let all of the children see that they would be part of the change. Like little kids are going to be like, "Oh, that's horrible. That's so mean, I would do this, I would do that to help." Right? So asking them how they would be part of the change. And then helping them see that, like, these things are still going on, our communities are still struggling from these things. And that you can be part of that change, and you have a choice to make. And he talks about, like, the the sections of teaching history, like, we need to understand help children understand that there were a lot of Black people who stood up against it, and fought, but there are also a lot of white people too. And we can show them those examples so that people can see that you as a white child have a choice to make, you can be the person, you know, doing the oppressing or you can be the person standing up. You, like you totally have that agency, that we are modeling that for our children that we always have a choice to make, and that they that we can empower them to make those, you know, really hard choices, but really important choices and that there have always always always been people of all colors, fighting for what's right.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:03

All right, friends, I will see you in Season Seven I will see you in Season Seven on August 30. But before I go, I have a favor to ask of you. So I've been sitting here putting together the list of episodes that I want to make for Season Seven, things that I'm really excited about and interested in. And one of the things I started to do was making a list of dream guests. I have had some of the most amazing interview guests on the show, everyone from family members to authors and professors. It has been "I mean this job, I'm so grateful for it. It's been a dream come true. I have learned so much and I know that there still is so much to learn and so many people to learn from. So if you have any ideas about dream guests that you would like on First Name Basis, we're going to do an Instagram post, so keep an eye out for that. But you can also email me at hello@firstnamebasis.org And tell me who do you want me to interview on First Name Basis in the upcoming seasons. Okay, can you do that for me? I'm super excited to hear who you want to hear from, because I'm sure we can all learn together.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 15:07

Okay, I love you so much. I'll talk to you soon. 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-Size 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.