

3.07 Service Not Saviorism

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Carter Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Three, Episode Seven, "Service, Not Saviorism."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:14
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 00:49
Hello, First Name Basis fam, I am so glad you are here. We are smack-dab in the middle of the holiday season, and I know that means that so many people are thinking a lot about service. This time of year helps us really focus on service and helping the people around us and really digging in and serving our communities. And I wanted to make this episode so that we can make sure that we are doing that service in a way that is responsible, respectful, and helpful, and not causing any damage. Before we jump in, I want to remind you of our First Name Basis Patreon community. Patreon is a place where you can support the show. So if you are learning from and being blessed by the First Name Basis podcast, I would ask that you support us over on Patreon. We have an amazing group of parents, caregivers, teachers—lots of different people in different stages of life—who are committed to living out anti-racism in their own lives and teaching their children that they have stewardship and influence over about what it looks like to be anti-racist in their community and be leaders and working towards justice. So every month, I do a Q & A session with the First Name Basis Patreon community. And that is where anyone who is supporting us over on Patreon can ask a question about anti-racism, anti-bias, we talk about politics a lot as well. So anything that's on your heart and on your mind that

you're struggling with or trying to really work through, we talk about that over there. So join us over on Patreon at patreon.com/firstnamebasis. I'll make sure to put the link in the show notes. And our next Q & A session is coming up on December 29. And if you miss the session, please do not worry one bit, because I always record them and they are available forever. So if you have a question and you say, "Oh my goodness, I was wondering that too," you'll be able to go back and listen, no matter what day it is.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:55

The other thing I wanted to mention before we begin is a trigger warning for my Black and Indigenous brothers and sisters. Now I know that I say this all the time, but so much of the oppression that we see playing out today can be traced back to slavery and indigenous genocide. Now I'm not going to be talking specifically about genocide today; I'm going to talk a little bit about Indian boarding schools, and I know that can be a really painful topic for my Indigenous friends. So if that is not something that you can carry today, or you can hold, please do not worry. I will not be offended one bit if you decide to listen to something else. Everyone else, I encourage you to really lean into what I'm going to share with you today and listen with an open heart.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:45

So as I mentioned at the beginning, today we are going to be unpacking white saviorism. First, I'm going to start by giving you the definition, the characteristics, some examples of when you might have seen it or when you might have perpetuated it, and then I will share with you five reflection questions that you can ask yourself before you start doing service with a community. These are questions that you'll want to have at the front of your mind and really work through to understand what your role is, what your responsibilities are, and how you can truly serve instead of acting like a white savior. I also wanted to remind you that I try really hard not to use the words low income or poor. Instead, I use under-resourced or exploited communities, because I feel like that really helps paint the picture of what the system is doing to these communities. When we say things like low income or poor, we're implicitly putting the blame on the community instead of really recognizing that there's a system in place that created this extreme wealth gap that we are seeing. So instead of saying "these poor communities" or "poor countries," I'm going to say under resourced communities or exploited countries, because that is really the root of the problem. We have lots of resources, but they aren't being distributed in an equitable way. And that's why we have so many communities that are struggling.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:18

Okay, so what even is a white savior? I have two different definitions that I want to share with you. The first comes from an article called "What is a White Savior Complex?" And it says, "A white person who acts to help non-white people, but in a context which can be perceived as self serving." Now, I want to change that definition a little bit, because I don't think that it's really appropriate to say non-white people. When you're talking about someone who is not white, you need to say Black Indigenous People of Color or People of Color. Or if you have a very specific group that you're talking about, just say that group. Say Black if you're talking about Black people, but when you say non-white, you are still centering whiteness, and you're

talking about people's identity in terms of lack from a mindset that is saying that they are lacking something: they're lacking whiteness, they are non-white, but in reality we are people of color. So I would change it to say a white person who acts to help Black indigenous People of Color but in a context which can be self serving. I wouldn't even say "perceived" as self serving, because it is self serving. The other definition that I want to share with you comes from Layla Saad's book "Me and White Supremacy." She says, quote, "This idea that BIPOC countries and people are inferior in worth, capability, intelligence, and self determination as compared to white-dominated countries and people with white privilege is a foundational aspect of white supremacy." End quote. So this often happens very implicitly, but when someone is acting out of white saviorism, or when entire communities are embracing white saviorism, this is the idea that Black Indigenous People of Color can't help themselves, that they need white people to save them, and that white-dominated communities and white-dominated cultures are the ones that we should be striving to be like, they have all the answers and we to turn to them for guidance to help us solve our problems. White saviorism really sends the message that communities of color or countries that have been disenfranchised by colonialism are lacking the ability to solve their own problems, instead of confronting the reality that what they're missing is resources, not wherewithall. Our communities have been exploited for so long, and that is why we are seeing these problems.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 07:55

So what are the characteristics of a white savior? Or what are the characteristics of white saviorism? There is an anti-racist educator that I support on Patreon named Britt Hawthorne. And if you've been here for any amount of time, you know that I love her so much. She is like my anti-racist idol. Brit, if you ever hear this, you have changed my life. I have been following her for years, and I'm so grateful for all that she has taught me. And I was watching one of her webinars on her Patreon, and she talks about anti-racist, anti-bias teaching because she's an educator. And she was talking about white saviorism when it comes to education. And she listed out a ton of characteristics of white saviorism on this webinar, and so I wanted to share them with you. And I will link her Patreon in the show notes so that you can go and support her, too, because her work is absolutely amazing. So even though she was talking about teachers in this context, it can be applied widely to white saviorism in general. She talked about how white saviors believe that people of color need them to succeed, that they have resentment if there is a lack of gratefulness or a lack of progress. They are starting to resent the community. They don't recognize institutional racism and they really emphasize meritocracy. They don't want to share power or be held accountable for their actions. They really seek control in the situation, and they don't involve the people impacted in the decision making process.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 09:32

I was reading an article called "The White Savior Industrial Complex" by Teju Cole. And in the article he says, quote, "The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening." End quote. And this really made me think about the people that I know who would vote for someone who perpetuates really oppressive policies—someone who criminalizes immigration and separates children from their families—they give these people their vote. And then they still think that it's appropriate for them to go to these same countries where the immigrants are coming from and do volunteer work or serve. To me, that is really one of the key characteristics of white

saviorism: someone who would vote for really oppressive policies in order to protect their own privilege but then go and volunteer in another country, as if the policies that they're voting for aren't directly affecting the people that they're trying to serve.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:37

One of the key issues with white saviorism that we need to be on the lookout for is that white saviorism is not concerned with the root causes of the problems that they are claiming to tackle. So in that article that I mentioned, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," Teju Cole says, quote, "All he sees is need, but he sees no need to reason out the need for the need." End quote. Now I know that he just said "need" like 15 times, but basically what he's saying here is the white savior sees that there is a need, but does not recognize that the real solutions will come when we go to the root of the problem, when we go to the need for the need. Why is there a need in the first place? I'll give you a hint: colonialism, racism, all of those types of things.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:29

So there is an amazing organization called No White Saviors, and on their website, they say quote, "No white saviors is an advocacy campaign led by a majority female, majority African team of professionals based in Kampala, Uganda, Our collective experience in the development and aid sectors has led us to a deep commitment to seeing things change in a more equitable and anti-racist direction." End quote. This is another one of those Instagram accounts that I've been following forever, and I've learned so much from and I love one of their taglines, they say, quote, "We never said 'no white people,' we just know you shouldn't be the hero of the story." End quote. I love that, because I feel like it hits the nail on the head. When it comes to saviorism, the white savior wants to be the center of attention. They want to be seen as a savior, as a hero, as saving someone from themselves or saving someone from these horrible circumstances, and that is so problematic. Now, No White Saviors is based in Africa, but so much of what they said can be applied to any under-resourced community or exploited country that we are going to talk about. And they have a section on their website, a frequently asked questions. So I thought this was so helpful and eye opening. So what I'm going to do is throughout the episode, I'm going to share with you a few of their FAQs and the answers that they give to them. This question that I'm going to share with you in just a sec speaks directly to the fact that people are addressing the symptoms of the problem, but not looking deeper to understand the root cause.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 13:06

Here's one of their FAQ is it says, "Shouldn't Africa be grateful that white people and any other persons in positions of privilege are helping?" What they say in response is, "The question is, how are you helping? If your need to help is not helping to solve the root causes of the most pressing problems of the African continent, but rather creating a dependency pattern and upholding white supremacy, then please do not help us. The very systems that give you the power and resources to help us are the ones that are unjustly exploiting us. And we believe that we deserve much more than charity." End quote. When people are engaging in white

saviorism, instead of really truly serving, they are doing more harm than good. They're hurting more than they're helping. And I will dive deeper into that later in the episode. But first, I want to give you some examples of places that you might see why saviorism pop up in your life.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:04

So the first thing that comes to mind for me is movies. There are so many movies out there that really center the white savior. For example, if you've seen the movie "Freedom Writers," there is a white teacher who comes into a predominantly Black and Latinx school and quote unquote "saves the children" there from their community. If you've seen "The Blind Side" with Sandra Bullock where she saves this football player, or even the movie "Hidden Figures." So Carter and I saw "Hidden Figures" in the theater, and after we watched the movie, Carter had a really interesting reflection that I want him to share with you.

C Carter Bradshaw 14:49

If you haven't seen the movie "Hidden Figures," it focuses on the story of three Black women who worked for NASA in the 1950s. One of these women was Katherine Johnson, who's an exceptionally gifted mathematician. Of course, in the 50s, things were segregated. So in the movie, we see Katherine Johnson have to take long walks across NASA's campus whenever she needed a bathroom break, because she wasn't allowed to use the bathroom nearest to where she worked because it was for whites only. These walks would take big chunks out of her workday, and eventually her boss—a white man who's played by Kevin Costner, I can't remember the character's name—but he gets really frustrated. And he confronts her and says, "Why? Why can't you just be here and work? Why do you take these giant breaks during the day?" So Katherine Johnson tells them the truth and says, "It's because I'm not allowed to use this restroom right here. I have to take these long walks across campus." So the character played by Kevin Costner, his immediate reaction is he marches down to that closest bathroom. There's a sign above it that says "whites only" or "white restroom," he takes out a crowbar and knocks down the sign. And the way that it's portrayed in the movie, the scene is set up with really inspirational music, and it seems like they're trying to portray Kevin Costner as a hero.

C Carter Bradshaw 16:08

I think if I had seen this movie seven or eight years ago, I would have been awestruck or inspired by what Kevin Costner's character was doing. But by the time I saw this movie, I was a few years into my anti-racism journey, and I saw it in a different light. It's not that what he did was wrong. Segregation was wrong, and so for him to fight against, that was the right thing to do. But when I watched that scene, I sat there, and I just, I thought about it from Katherine Johnson's perspective. What is she supposed to say? Is she supposed to tear up and be really inspired and say, "Oh, thank you for doing that for me"? Of course, not. The only thing that was done for her is to give her basic dignity and access to facilities that everybody else already had and that she should have had in the first place. So that scene made me just a little uncomfortable. As I watched it, I listened to the music, and it seemed to be suggesting that this Kevin Costner character was a hero, when in reality, all he really did is say, "Yes, you can pee in the same general area that I do." And again, it's not that his actions and tearing the sign down were wrong. It's really the attitude that the story is told with. When you tell that story as

though he's a hero or a savior, that is too accepting of the assumption that he is somehow above her and has come down to lift her from her lowly station into the whites only bathroom. That assumption is false and needs to be rejected. The reality is that they are equals, they were always equals. And she always should have had access to that space.

C Carter Bradshaw 17:49

The last thing I'll say is, we should notice that he didn't tear down the sign because he was committed to promoting inclusion, or equality in the workplace. He tore down the sign because he was frustrated that she wasn't getting enough work done for him. So his primary motive was self interest. And that's a pretty good indicator to me that he's engaging in white saviorism.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:13

When talking about these movies, in "Me and White Supremacy," Layla Saad says, "Often these white actors are given characters of great emotional depth and nuance, while BIPOC characters are romanticized with racial tropes or over simplified cultural contexts." End quote. So in the movies, we see that the white characters are extremely dynamic, and they have all this potential and all of these skills. And usually the Black or Indigenous characters are people who are a lot more simplified and don't have as big of a character arc as the other characters. So that's how you might have seen white saviorism play out in movies. And I challenge you to kind of try to spot it when you're watching a movie next time that has a white main character and characters of color who are the supporting actors or actresses.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 19:04

Another way that we see white saviorism is through policy. Our country has a long history of white saviorism. And one of the main examples of this is Indian boarding schools. So I've talked in episodes in the past about Indian boarding schools, but if you are unfamiliar, it's a policy that was implemented by the United States government that took Indigenous children away from their families in order to quote unquote, "civilize them." In Britt Hawthorne's Patreon webinar, she referenced a video by Vox; it was called "How the US Stole Thousands of Native American Children." And in that video, it talks about the reality of these Indian boarding schools. And one of the things they said was that in 1900, 20,000, Indigenous children were in boarding schools, but by 1925, that number was more than 60,000 children. These children were taken from their family, taken from their community. Their hair was cut, which was probably a really traumatic experience for them, because so many of them had never had a haircut in their life. And hair to them was a very sacred symbol. So they cut their hair. They told them that they weren't allowed to speak their Indigenous language and that they couldn't practice any of their cultural customs. And they made them change their clothes. It was extremely traumatizing, and the Indigenous community is still feeling the effects of that trauma.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:34

Here at the Heard Museum in Arizona, they have an entire exhibit dedicated to these Indian boarding schools and helping people understand what they were and learning more about them. And I remember going to that exhibit last year on around Thanksgiving time. And this

them. And I remember going to that exhibit last year, or around Thanksgiving time. And this quote, it jumped out at me and it is burned in my mind. It said, "Kill the Indian, save the man." So as I was thinking about this episode, about white saviorism, and I thought, "That is white saviorism. That's the embodiment of white saviorism. Killing the Indian and saving the man." So I went on a little hunt, I did a little deep dive to figure out where did this phrase come from and who said it. So here's what I found. In 1879, there was an Indian boarding school open called the Carlisle Barracks. And it was founded in Pennsylvania by a man named Captain Richard H. Pratt. During the height of the Indian boarding school program, there were 350 boarding schools throughout the country, and so many of them were patterned after the Carlisle Barracks. In 1892, the founder of the Carlisle Barracks, Richard H. Pratt, he gave a speech at a convention. This convention was called the 19th Annual Conference of Charities and Correction, and it was in this speech that he talked about the necessity of, quote, "killing the Indian and saving the man." End quote. This speech is given 13 years into the Indian boarding school policy. So after 13 years, he's trying to show how amazing these schools are. He's trying to prove that what they're doing is right, what they're doing is just, and that it's important to continue with this program. And here's what he says in his speech, quote, "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this, that all the Indian there is and the race should be dead, kill the Indian in him and save the man." End quote. He goes on in his speech to compare the indigenous population with the enslaved Africans that were brought to America. So he says, quote, "Inscrutable are the ways of Providence. Horrible as were the experiences of its introduction and of slavery itself, there was concealed in them the greatest blessing that ever came to the Negro race. Seven millions of blacks from cannibalism in darkest Africa to citizenship and free and enlightened America, not full, not complete citizenship, but possible, probable citizenship and on the highway, and near to it." End quote. So when he saying "inscrutable are the ways of Providence," what he's saying is, "Well, we don't understand why God allowed this to happen, or why God would sanction something like slavery," but then he goes on to justify it.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:43

As shocking as this might sound to you right now. I was talking to a friend recently who described that her in-laws, were saying something like, "Oh, well, slavery was actually good, because it meant that the Africans were able to hear the gospel when they wouldn't have been able to hear the gospel otherwise." No, no, I'm sorry. God is more powerful than that. There are lots of ways that God can get the gospel all across the world. And slavery is not one of the tactics that I believe God would use to do that. In addition, there are parts of the Bible that take place in Africa. So that's just not a thing that I will ever believe.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:27

Okay, I want to read you a little bit more of Captain Pratt's speech because he continues to talk about how the African Americans should be so grateful that they were enslaved because of all the amazing things that they were able to gain from it. He says, quote, "Denied the right of schools, they became English speaking and industrious through the influences of association. Scattered here and there under the care and authority of individuals of the higher race, they learned self support and something of citizenship, and so reached their present place. No other influence or force would have so speedily accomplished such a result. Left in Africa surrounded by their fellow savages, our seven millions of industrious black fellow citizens would still be

savages. Transferred into these new surroundings and experiences, behold the result. They became English speaking and civilized, because forced into association with English speaking and civilized people, became healthy and multiplied, because they were property, and industrious because industry, which brings contentment and health was a necessary quality to increase their value." End quote, did you catch that part about how we would be savages if it weren't for slavery? And how living with white people helped us increase in value? Oh, my goodness gracious. I wanted to read you the whole speech, and I will not. I will put it in the show notes. So you can read yourself. It is definitely as horrible as it sounds. Carter talked me out of reading the entire thing. But man: it is pretty bad.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:07

I want to end with this quote that he says about the Indigenous people. He says, quote, "The Indians under our care remain savage because forced back upon themselves and away from association with English speaking and civilized people, and because of our savage example and treatment of them." End quote, so basically, what he's saying is the reason that the indigenous people are still quote unquote, "savages" is because we haven't forced them to assimilate with us. And so by sending them to these schools, by ripping children away from their parents, they will be better off.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:40

Now, it's not like this is a secretly recorded conversation. This is him speaking at a convention. This is something that he was really proud of. He was touting his school as an example for the nation. He really, truly thought that he was helping, but his attempt was rooted in the idea that he and other white people were superior to Black and Indigenous People of Color. So any of the good that he might have accomplished if he had recognized Native Americans as fully human, worthy of dignity and respect, was entirely poisoned by a flawed notion that they needed to elevate their culture to be closer to whiteness. I know that what he's saying sounds egregious. But I hear things all the time that aligns with his line of thinking. Like I just shared, there are people who believe that slavery was a necessary evil. And that's just not true.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 27:34

So in that video, "How the US Stole Thousands of Native American Children," it shows images that are absolutely chilling. It is these images of parents who have camped outside of the boarding school. So these indigenous parents set up camp right outside the gate of the school so that they could be closer to their children. There were so many parents who fought against these policies; they didn't want their children taken away. The parents who refused to give up their children were sent to jail, and they had their food rations withheld from them. There are so many examples of white saviorism when it comes to taking children of color away from their families and putting them with white families. One example that's even more recent is from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There was an Indian placement program that was put into place by the LDS church in 1947. And I linked an article from their website about commonly asked questions about the placement program. And in the article, it says, quote, "The objective of the Indian placement program has always been to provide children with educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities that would contribute to their leadership

development." End quote. My question here is, why do you think that these children could not have cultural opportunities, spiritual opportunities, social, educational, or leadership development opportunities within their own family? When Carter and I first had this conversation about the Indian placement program, he was like, "What's the problem? I don't understand. Their families didn't have the necessary resources to take care of them." And I was like, "That is ridiculous." Here's what we should be doing. We should be giving Indigenous families the money to take care of their children and keeping parents with their children, especially as a church who upholds the family as something that's so sacred to the Lord and believes in the power of families and the importance of keeping families together. It doesn't make sense to me why you would take any child away from their parents. If there are families who can't provide for their children, just give them the resources to provide for their children. Children need to be with their parents.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 29:57

And I want you to pause here and take a deep breath because I can sense that some of you might be feeling a little bit defensive. And really, I need you to understand that is rooted in Saviorism, that any of these tense feelings that are encouraging you to defend these types of programs is rooted in the idea that white families can better provide for children of color than their own families can. And that is the epitome of white saviorism.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 30:30

One of the things that is really damaging about these programs is that they target children. Children are in a super important phase of life, where they're developing their sense of self, they're developing a pride in who they are and where they come from and of their culture. And when you take them away from their family, and you place them with a family, who is white, the message that you are sending is that your family and your culture are not good enough for you to be successful, that if you leaned into who you are, if you lean into your culture, then you won't have the same opportunities that you would if you went with this white family. And if that is our reality, if children from families of color don't have the same opportunities as children who live with white families, then there's something that needs to be changed. It's not because white families are innately superior or innately better than families of color. Something needs to change in our communities.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:28

Another example of a time when you might see white saviorism is through charity work. So this is when people go into under-resourced communities, and they're trying to save them. In "Me and White Supremacy," Lalya Saad says, quote, "People with white privilege believe that just through their presence and their privilege they have what it takes to rescue BIPOC from the very nuanced and complex issues they are faced with." End quote. And this is where I want to talk about short-term mission trips.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:00

Okay, my friends, I have a story for you. So I know so many of you are familiar with short-term

Okay, my friends, I have a story for you. So I know so many of you are familiar with short-term mission trips, these are the trips where you go overseas, or you go to an under-resourced community, and you are serving, and you're doing all of these things and taking lots of photos to tell everybody at home all about what happened, right? And they can be humanitarian, or they can be proselytizing, but they are generally seen as white saviorism. And let me tell you why. So I want to tell you the story of the first time that I really came to understand that short-term mission trips are white saviorism, or saviorism in general. And let me tell you, I was pretty dang mad because I wanted to go on one. I thought that it would be an amazing experience, and I was fully planning on going on a short-term mission trip. So when I was a freshman in college, I was in this church group called Campus Crusade for Christ, or we called it "Crew" for short. And we went on a trip called Fall Getaway. It was kind of like a retreat, like a religious retreat, where we would all get together. And we would do Bible study and worship and write in our journals. It was a really cool opportunity to connect with the Lord and to connect with other Christians on campus, and I was just weeks into my freshman year. So I really didn't know anybody who was there. Thank goodness, my neighbor was there. I had known her growing up, but she was a sophomore, and they separated us by grade. And so she spent all of her time with the sophomores and I spent all my time with the freshmen. And so I'm this little bright-eyed Christian who grew up in the suburbs of AZ, and I really didn't know very much about exploited countries or under-resourced communities. And in walks my friend, Eva.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 33:50

Now, I want to preface this story by telling you that we developed an amazing friendship, and we are best friends. But my first impression of her was two thumbs down. Eva, if you're listening, I don't remember if I've told you this story before, but here it goes. So she comes in, and she had just read this book called "When Helping Hurts," and she said that short-term mission trips cause more harm than good. I literally could not believe what she was saying. I could not believe why she would say such a thing. I was completely shocked. And when she was saying this, she went on to explain that the money that people were using to fly themselves to other places, with their low skill level, could be better used by people in the community that were already on the ground doing the work. And I just remember thinking, "But I want to do that. I want to go to another country and serve and help." And she really helped me see that it's actually more beneficial if I raised all that money and sent it to the people who are already there doing the important work. I remember her saying something like, "If you really want to help, you'll send the money instead of going yourself." And I was like, "Oh, man." So eventually I read the book. And she was right. That book was right. I'm not going to quote it directly, because I read it when I was a freshman in college, so it was ages ago, and I don't have a copy of it with me, but I will still link it in the show notes, if that's something that you're interested in. I do remember one of the important things that they said in the book was that if you want to help, you really need to make sure that you are in it for the long haul. They talked about the importance of making long-term sustainable impact. And that means that you have to invest a good chunk of time. It generally takes a couple of years for your service to be truly impactful in the community. Because think about it: first, you have to spend time getting to know and understanding the community that you're trying to serve. You have to build relationships with the people in that community. You have to understand the problems that they're facing. You have to learn who the leaders are and what you can do to support them and all those different types of things. And that takes a lot of invested time. It's estimated that 1.5 million people from the United States go on short-term mission trips every year, and those people spend about \$2 billion to complete these missions. So imagine if that money was given directly to the people who are working on the ground in those countries and in those

communities. Imagine the type of impact that the people who are already there, the leaders who are already really digging in doing the work, could make if they had all of that money. No White Saviors, the organization that I mentioned previously, speak to this directly in their frequently asked questions. They say, quote, "If you don't have the qualifications, simply don't do it. Empathy and love shouldn't be your only reasons. You need more than that in order to make a lasting and beneficial change. Give your tourist dollars to African businesses and donate to African-led organizations, which will support the people who are investing in these communities long before and after your short trip. Generally, a short-term mission or service trip is more about the experience for the individual taking the trip than it is about the community they're traveling to. If you really got honest with yourself, the money that you're spending to travel could be better invested directly to the project you are going to volunteer with. With that said, there are some instances where your unique and specialized skill set can be useful." End quote.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 37:35

I was really happy to find out that No White Saviors agreed with the book that I read, "When Helping Hurts," on this issue, it really is better to either invest a lot of time truly understanding the community before you go, and then staying for a long time, or just sending your money directly to that community so they can do amazing work with it. And the other thing that I mentioned a little bit earlier that bothers me about trips like this, is that the people who are willing to go on these trips are the same people who will vote for oppressive and racist policies. One more thing that I want you to really recognize when it comes to short-term mission trips is the problematic behavior that goes on during these trips. So one of the examples of this problematic behavior is when people are taking pictures of children and families and sharing them without their consent. You can look anywhere, there are photos all over social media of Black and brown children from under-resourced communities and exploited countries. And I like to think of this as like me being a substitute teacher, going into someone's classroom for a week, and taking photos of all the kids in the class, having them sit on my lap taking their picture, and then posting it on my Facebook or on my Instagram. Are you kidding me? I would get in so much trouble, I would be fired so fast, because those parents would never tolerate that. You need to understand that if it's inappropriate for your children, it's also inappropriate for other people's children. If you don't want people taking pictures of your kid and plastering it all over their social, then why would you do that to someone else's family? And the thing is, even if you do ask permission, the people that you're asking, they might not have a clear understanding of what they're consenting to. They might not truly understand what it means to post a photo to your Instagram for everybody to see. So I think that it's just important that if you are in another country, you should not be taking photos of other people's kids or families in vulnerable situations and sharing them online.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 39:52

Another example of this problematic behavior is something that I hear all the time when people come back from these trips. They say stuff like, "Wow, those people are so happy with so little," or, "I should be more grateful for what I have, because their attitude is so joyful, and they have next to nothing." And when people say this kind of stuff, it implies that this is the natural order of things. And, like, there's really not a whole lot that we can do to change it and to shift the power dynamic, because they have so little, and I have so much so I should be grateful for what

I have. But that's just how it is they have a little bit and I have a lot. And one time I was at dinner with another family, and they were telling this story about when they were in another country, and there were children on the street selling things. And he was talking about these children who were going up and down the rows of cars trying to sell things to the people inside the cars. And what he said to his children was, "Look at these children. You need to be so grateful that that's not you. You need to be thankful that you don't have to do this in order to survive." And I just felt so uneasy with this, because even though he was trying to help his children recognize what they have and be grateful, it should not have been that conversation. The conversation should have been, "Why are there so many children who have to do this in order to survive while so many other children in our community live comfortable and privileged lives? What should our family do to redistribute our resources so that we can make this world more equitable." And just, instead of just telling our children, "Be grateful that's not you," we should be telling them, "Wait a minute, what's wrong here? And how can we help fix that wrong? What can we do to make things more equitable?"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 41:45

This really reminded me of this Christmas song, and I heard it the other day, when I was at the grocery store, getting a few things. It's that song, it's called "Do They Know It's Christmas," And it's by a group of, like, super famous celebrities. They call themselves Band Aid. You'll know some of the names: it was Bono, Phil Collins, George, Michael, etc. Lots of people. And they did this benefit concert in order to raise money for famine in Ethiopia. And in the concert, they sang that song "Do They Know It's Christmas," and in the song it says, quote, "There's a world outside your window, and it's a world of dread and fear, where the only water flowing is the bitter sting of tears. And the Christmas bells, that ring there are clanging chimes of doom. Well tonight, thank God, it's them instead of you." End quote. Ya likes...oh my gosh. Who let this song ever be recorded? "Tonight, thank God, it's them instead of you." No. No. We live in a community of abundance. We have so many resources. We really could solve these problems if we redistribute our resources and make things more equitable. Nobody should be living in famine. Please remember that I am not trying to say that you shouldn't show gratitude or that you shouldn't serve, I just want to make sure that we are doing it in a way that is responsible, and that we are not causing more harm than good when we are doing so.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 43:15

So I want to share with you now five reflection questions that I have come up with that you can ask yourself and you can work through with your family or just by yourself in order to understand where you're at when it comes to service, and what you need to do in order to prepare to serve in the community. Okay, so question number one: is the organization I'm partnering with led by Black Indigenous People of Color? This question is so important, because I hear so many people say stuff like, "I want to be a voice for the voiceless. But the reality is that people aren't voiceless, the community that you are serving, they have a voice, but maybe you can't hear it because you're not listening. So the people in the community that you are serving, they need to be leading the change, and you need to be in the supporting role. You don't need to be the voice for the voiceless. They have voices, you need to step back and amplify those voices and help other people hear what they are trying to say in the solutions that they are putting forth to the problems that they're facing.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 44:24

Question number two: where am I on my anti racism journey, and what preconceived notions do I have about the community I'm serving? So it is likely that you are harboring biases toward the community that you're hoping to work with. This might be because of images that you've seen in the media, or things that you've read about the community or things that you've heard in passing. That is totally normal. We talk about that all the time. Biases are part of life, but what you need to do is sit down and really unpack what those are, where they're coming from, and try to fight against them. I really need you to understand that we are not waiting for people to come and save us. We're using our skills and our people to create innovative solutions to the problems that are facing our communities, and we just need your support in order to move those innovative ideas forward.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 45:20

Question number three: when and how am I going to learn about the history of the community I am serving? So I really want you to dig deep and try and figure out in what ways how white supremacy and colonialism played a role in the problems that this community is facing. Because so many of the problems that we see stem from white supremacy. So many of the problems that we see stem from our history of enslavement, our history of colonialism, of taking resources when we shouldn't have, of exploiting communities, exploiting countries. So what is the connection there? How can you see white supremacy playing out within these communities?

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Jasmine Bradshaw 46:01

Question number four, what is my attitude towards the people that I'm working with? Carter said something really powerful to me the other day, and he was talking about this attitude of charity work. And we were really unpacking the idea that it's not charity. It's redistributing your resources, because the system has been set up to give them to you over other people. So it's not like you are choosing out of the goodness of your heart to give up some of what you have. You need to do that. It's your responsibility, because the system has given to you unfairly, has taken from other people and given to you, and you now have a responsibility to redistribute, to make things more equitable, by giving of your time and of your resources. And just a reminder, it is not your place to lead or to say you are there to build relationships. You are there to collaborate.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 47:02

And the last question: what am I going to do if my service begins to look more like Saviorism? In Britt Hawthorne's webinars, she talked a lot about how white saviorism is a mindset. She talked about how there are these macro and micro systems at play that really lead to people believing in white saviorism, and having this mindset of white saviorism, and it's so easy to slip in and out of that mindset. So even if you are really dedicated to leaning into unpacking your saviorism and trying to serve instead of save, there are some moments when you might slip

back into that. And it's just important that you are taking the time to be reflective, and look critically at your thoughts and your actions to understand. Okay, where is the line? Where am I trying to be a savior instead of trying to serve?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 48:00

I really hope that those five questions will help you unpack the Saviorism that you might be harboring. And I really encourage you to go out and serve and partner with communities and build relationships so that you can make lasting impact. It is so important that we are living our values. And I know you're here because you value anti-racism, and this is part of that work. And I want to remind you of something that I always say, that your impact is greater than your intent. So even if you think that the impact that you're making is something really amazing if the community is telling you, "No, this is not what we need," or "No, you're acting like a savior instead of advocating with us," then you really need to listen to that. You need to understand what your impact is. If your impact and your intent do not match up, use those reflection questions, reflect and figure out where the disconnect is, where are you going wrong so that you can change it. Of course I will put these questions in the show notes. So if you didn't have time to write them down, you can find them there or you can find them on our website, firstnamebasis.org. I love having these conversations with you. I am so encouraged after I record these, because it just makes me know that we are on this amazing journey and doing great work. I hope you have a great week and are doing a little something to get yourself in the holiday spirit.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 49:36

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 at [firstname.basis](https://www.instagram.com/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.