

3.10 The Untold Story of Martin Luther King, Jr

📅 Thu, 7/28 7:59AM ⌚ 42:25

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

martin luther king, people, agape, kennedy, economic injustice, fbi, bobby kennedy, king, martin luther king's, community, negro, non violence, civil rights movement, talks, leader, thinking, home, read, stand, negros

SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Three, Episode 10: "The Untold Story of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."

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. And I'm so glad that you are here in the midst of so much chaos in our country. I've been thinking so much about what happened at the Capitol — the insurrection and the violence — and I've been considering what I wanted to share with you. And it really has come down to the reason why we exist here at First Name Basis, it always comes back to the same thing: I think that the most important conversations that we have are the ones in our homes. I think to all of the people who participated in the violence and all of the people who are involved in perpetuating these lies, and I think about the conversations that they must be having in their home. I bet you most of those people who participated in the violent attack on our democracy have had someone in their life who has wanted to say, "Stop, you're wrong, you need to stop this." I think about all of those dinner table conversations where people have been silent. All of those Thanksgiving conversations where no one spoke up because they knew that the uncle would never change his mind. Well, that's just not true. We need to be speaking up, we need to be speaking out and we need to

start with our family. We need to start in our homes with our children by giving them truth and teaching them how to stand up against misinformation. And then we need to start with the people in our circle. I'm pretty sure we all know someone who we would like to share our heart with and we would like to share the truth with but maybe we're a little bit anxious. I know I sure am. But I pray that we would all have the courage to stand up and speak out for what is right. And that's why I wanted to share this untold story of Martin Luther King, Jr. with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:49

So this episode is a replay. If you've been here for a while I shared this episode last year. But as I was going through and thinking about what I wanted to share this week, I realized that this is it. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, his life, everything that he stood for, needs to be an inspiration to us of what we should do and what we can do and how we can respond when we see injustice in our community.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:18

Last week, I announced a program that I am working on for you and your families, or you and your classroom if you are a teacher, and I am so excited about it. It is called Bite-Sized Black History. Bite-Sized Black History is a program that empowers you to teach the little ones you love about 12 brilliant Black Americans that have been overlooked by our history books. So I imagine Bite-Sized Black History being like untold stories for kids. If you love these untold stories episodes, you are going to love Bite-Sized Black History, because what I've done is I've dug through and found some amazing heroes in the Black community that we have probably never learned about. So many of these, I was like, "How do I not know about this amazing person?" So what I'm doing is putting together these bite-sized podcast episodes, and there will be 12 of them. And each one will highlight a different person. And then there's a booklet that goes along with it. The booklet has a coloring page where you can color the person and you can write down with your family the things that you've learned and it will have reflection questions. I am over the moon about this program. I think you're going to love it. Thinking about it, thinking about you using it in your home with your children, gives me goosebumps. So if that is something that sounds as exciting to you as it does to me, go to firstnamebasis.org/bitesizedblackhistory, all one word, and sign up to be on the Bite-Sized Black History email list. That way you will know exactly when it comes out and you'll have access to early bird pricing. I can't wait to celebrate Black History Month with you. It is going to be fantastic. Make sure you sign up at firstnamebasis.org/bitesizedblackhistory.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:07

Okay, let's get to the untold story of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When I was listening to this episode in order to prepare to release it again to you, I was able to find the hope that I needed. I'm not going to lie to you guys "€" this has been really hard. The roller coaster that we've all been on is absolutely exhausting. And I was just thinking, how do people do this? How do people commit themselves to civil rights and ride this roller coaster day in and day out? And at the end of the episode, you will hear in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s own words, how he was able to cling to hope and not let the hatred and the vitriol tear down him and his family. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. And did you know that his name was not actually Martin

Luther King? When he was born he was named Michael King after his father. His father, as many people know, was a Baptist minister. And when Martin Luther King, Jr. was a young child " at this time his name is still Michael King " his father goes on a trip to Europe, and he visits Germany. And during this time, the Nazis are coming into power and his father is seeing the destruction that they're causing and the sadness in the country. And he also learns about Martin Luther, who was the leader of the Protestant church. He broke off from the Catholic Church and led this reformation and started what is now the Protestant church. And Michael King was so inspired by Martin Luther and all that he had done, that when he came home from Germany, he decided to change both his name and his son's name. So when Martin Luther King was five, his name changed from Michael King, Jr. to Martin Luther King, Jr.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:02

I just thought that was a super interesting piece of trivia, and we had to include it in the untold story. So in order to prepare for Martin Luther King Day and this episode, I've been reading this book called "The Radical King," which is a compilation of his speeches and his writings, and it is absolutely amazing. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Get your hands on a copy. It is outstanding. And in his book, he talks about how a lot of people usually ask him, like, "How did you get on this path? How did this become your journey?" And I just want to read you a passage from the book because he says it way better than I can, because it's his story.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:41

He says, quote, "Often the question has arisen concerning my own intellectual pilgrimage to non violence. In order to get at this question, it is necessary to go back to my early teens in Atlanta. I had grown up abhorring not only segregation, but also the oppressive and barbarous acts that grew out of it. I had passed spots where negroes had been savagely lynched, and had watched the Ku Klux Klan on its rides at night. I had seen police brutality with my own eyes and watched Negroes receive the most tragic injustice in the courts. All of these things had done something to my growing personality. I had come perilously close to resenting all white people. I had also learned that the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice. Although I came from a home of economic security and relative comfort, I could never get out of my mind the economic insecurity of many of my playmates, and the tragic poverty of those living around me. During my late teens, I worked two summers against my father's wishes. He never wanted my brother and me to work around white people because of the oppressive conditions in a plant that hired both Negroes and whites. Here, I saw economic injustice firsthand. I realized that the poor white was exploited just as much as the Negro. Through these early experiences, I grew up deeply conscious of the varieties of injustice in our society." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:09

So here he's talking all about his experiences growing up and how he's introduced to injustice and how he has seen both racial injustice and economic injustice. And I think that's a detail that a lot of us miss about Martin Luther King, is that he stood not only for racial injustice, he stood for all injustice, but especially economic injustice as well. And that economic injustice that he was fighting against was seen as a real threat in the society in the community. Obviously,

fighting against racial injustice was your major threat. But fighting against economic injustice was pretty intense, too, because who holds the money holds the power, and that is really what people don't want to give up.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:53

So when Martin Luther King, Jr. was only 15 years old, in 1944, he goes to college. He goes to an HBCU, which is an acronym for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. And he goes to Morehouse College, which is a really famous HBCU. And while he's in college, he reads Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience." And he says this is the moment when he becomes fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system. So being able to recognize that the laws, just because they are laws, doesn't mean they're just laws. That if you have evil laws, you should not be cooperating with them, you should be fighting back against them. So this is his first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance, which is what a lot of us know him to be famous for, his non violence.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:49

After that seed is planted, when he's in college at Morehouse, he decides to continue on with graduate school and get his PhD. So he goes for his PhD in Boston, and he graduates in 1955. And it's in June of 1955 after he graduates that he goes back to Montgomery, Alabama, to be a pastor. And this is kind of where everything takes off. So he's in Montgomery serving as a pastor. And he's even entertaining the idea of going into academia; he's not really thinking of being a community leader. He knows that he has these ideas and these philosophies that he wants to share, and he thinks that a great way to do that would be being a college professor and teaching them to young people. And he's not wrong, but his community, and I believe the Lord, have a different plan for him.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:37

So during 1955 is the same year as the Montgomery bus boycott. And if you remember, this was started by Rosa Parks when she refused to give up her seat on the bus. And that kicked off this boycott in which Black people all over refuse to ride the bus for an entire year. So what a lot of people don't understand about that is that it wasn't by chance. It wasn't spontaneous. Rosa Parks wasn't just tired after a long day. This was very calculated. The local chapter of the NAACP had been planning this boycott very meticulously. And we have an episode all about the bus boycott, called "The Untold Story of Rosa Parks.: It's Season Two, Episode Seven. So I'll put that in the show notes. But the NAACP plans this boycott, and they're looking for a spokesperson to be the mouthpiece for the resistance. And that's when Martin Luther King Jr. comes into the picture. He says, quote, "I neither started the protest nor suggested it. I simply responded to the call of the people for a spokesman." So I thought that was so interesting that he didn't even really necessarily think this was going to be his position in society. But because of his research and his education, and also his natural talent, he gets thrust into this position, and obviously he shines.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 13:01

Okay, so the Montgomery bus boycott is really successful. And the civil rights movement is really, really picking up steam, and then comes time for a presidential election in 1960. And it was really interesting. I originally heard this story on my very favorite podcast ever. It's called "Code Switch," and the title of the episode is "The Original Blexit," which is a silly sounding title, but it means "Black Exit," and they talk about the transition of Black people from generally voting along with the Republican Party, to switching to voting with the Democratic Party. And so that transition is happening, and there's this election between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. So the Black community isn't really sure which way they're going to go, and they're very skeptical of John F. Kennedy, because he's been holding these private meetings with white southern lawmakers. So it comes out that he told a Georgia Governor that he wouldn't ever use federal troops to force Georgia to desegregate their schools in exchange for the governor's endorsement of him. And of course, the governor was like, "okay," and says Georgia will vote for John F. Kennedy.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:18

So while all of that is happening with the Kennedy campaign, the Nixon campaign has a bunch of support from Jackie Robinson. You know Jackie Robinson; he was the first African American who was allowed to play professional baseball. So after Jackie Robinson's baseball career is over, he gets really into politics and civil rights. And he starts writing a column. And he actually while he was a baseball player, he was kind of pen pals with Richard Nixon. So during that time, Nixon was just the vice president, and he really liked baseball and he started riding back and forth with Jackie Robinson. So when Nixon is campaigning for president Jackie Robinson is backing him up 100%. And during this time right, before the election in October, the middle of October — actually the end of October, October 26, 1960, so think: this is the very end of October and the election is happening on November 3 — so in just a few weeks, Martin Luther King is demonstrating down in Georgia with some students, and he gets arrested. And the eyes of the nation are upon these two men campaigning for president. And they're kind of like, "Is anybody going to say anything about this and stand up against this unlawful arrest of Martin Luther King, Jr.?" So Jackie Robinson goes in to meet with Richard Nixon. And he tells him, "You need to call him. You need to call Martin Luther King while he's in jail, and you need to tell him that you are so sorry that this happened and that you don't support this and you think that it's wrong." And Nixon at that time says, "No, I really don't think I'm going to do that." And Jackie Robinson is absolutely heartbroken. And he says publicly that he doesn't think that Nixon deserves to be president anymore.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 16:02

So at the same time, John F. Kennedy hears about Martin Luther King's arrest, and he calls that Georgia Governor — the governor that he promised he wouldn't send federal troops in to desegregate his schools. He calls him and he says, "Governor, can you help me?" He tells him that he really wants Martin Luther King to be released from jail and asked him if there's anything he can do. And the governor just responds with, "I don't know if I can do that." And John F. Kennedy says to him, "Well, please call me back when you find out if you can help me or not." From there, John F. Kennedy kind of goes about his business, but he has a couple of advisors who are thinking about this and thinking about what they should do, if anything. And one of his advisors says, "I think we should call Coretta."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 16:48

Now, as you know, Coretta Scott King is Martin Luther King's wife, and she was pregnant at the time, and of course, she was terrified for the welfare of her husband. And he says, "I think the senator needs to call her and show his support to her. I think this would be a really great gesture, both politically and morally." So he and the other campaign advisors are going back and forth, and there are lots of people who think it's a terrible idea and it would be bad for the campaign, because it would make the southern whites think that they're not actually on their side. And there are others who are encouraging, like, "This is the right thing to do, and so we should do it." So that adviser goes into John F. Kennedy's hotel room, he's packing up his suitcase, and he tells him, "I think you should do this." And John F. Kennedy says, "I think you're right." So he calls Coretta Scott King, and the phone call lasts no more than 90 seconds. It's so short. But he just tells her that he wants to express his sympathy and his concern for Dr. King. And he tells her that if there's anything he can do to help, he would love to do it. And she says back to him, "We would love any help that you can give," and the call is over.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:02

John F. Kennedy is not very showy about this call, he doesn't, like, immediately go to reporters and tell them that this is what he did. And it wasn't even until he's on the plane flying somewhere that he talks to one of the reporters on the plane and explains that he made this phone call. And his brother Bobby Kennedy is his campaign manager at the time. And when he finds out that John F. Kennedy made this phone call, he is so angry. He's convinced that this completely lost in the election, and the all of the people that they've campaigned to, all of those southern white lawmakers, are now going to convince their states to vote for Richard Nixon. So soon after this phone call happens, Martin Luther King is released from jail, and he's going home on the plane and he stops to tell the reporters that Kennedy had a really big role in getting him out of jail. He says, quote, "I understand from very reliable sources that Senator Kennedy served as a great force in making the release possible. For him to be that courageous shows that he is really acting upon principle and not expediency." End quote. He doesn't quite endorse him, but he definitely says that he holds Kennedy in high esteem. And from there, Kennedy's campaign and the African American community takes off. And there are many historians who think that this phone call changed history. This statement from Dr. King, really galvanized the Black community to go out and vote for Kennedy. And he won the White House by only 118,000 votes. There were 68 million ballots cast in the selection, so 118,000 is very slim margin. He wins just by a hair over Richard Nixon. So basically, Martin Luther King Jr. helps John F. Kennedy win the presidency. And a lot of us, when we think of John F. Kennedy, we think of a president who fought for civil rights. Have you ever watched those like old movies in the civil rights era? You might see on somebody's wall three different photos, one of Martin Luther King, Jr., one of John F. Kennedy, and a third of Bobby Kennedy, because within the African American community, these men were seen as leaders of this movement. But as I was looking into it, of course, it's not that simple. And it seems like Kennedy's actions were a lot more reactive than they were proactive. He was pretty reluctant and working towards civil rights.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:36

So between 1960 and 1963 is seen as like a really explosive, violent time during the Civil Rights Movement. But the reality is that all of this stuff was happening, it just wasn't being recorded or

televised. So Martin Luther King and the other leaders of the movement decide on this strategy that they are going to do all of these things on television. They're going to expose the people who are being horrible and hateful and violent towards them on TV so that people across the country can see what's really going on. So all of this is happening during Kennedy's presidency — things like the Freedom Rides, where people rode across the country on buses in order to integrate the busing system, and things like integrating different colleges. And all of these events were very violent; there was blood and gore and fires. And in response to these events, to these televised events, that's when Kennedy takes action. So after the Freedom Rides, when it gets really nasty and gross, he sends federal troops down there to help desegregate the bus system. And after the Freedom Rides, of course, there is Birmingham, Alabama, with the infamous Bull Connor, who is this really aggressive, violent, nasty Commissioner of Public Safety for Alabama, who is willing to use fire hoses on demonstrators. He uses attack dogs, and he does mass arrests. And all of this is televised. And this is when Martin Luther King writes the letter from Birmingham jail, which is another thing that I would encourage you so strongly to read. It is absolutely amazing the things that he has to say, and it just — I feel like every time I read it, it hits me to my core. I can't go into it, because we don't have time. But please go and read it. I will put it in the show notes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:27

All right. So this is where the story turns totally bananas. And I learned stuff that I have never heard in my life. And I was like, "Why am I just not learning about this?" Oh, my goodness, here it goes. His Letter from a Birmingham Jail is in April of 1963. And it's in August of 1963 that they have the March on Washington and he gives his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. And of course we all know that that speech is so powerful. It's moving to anyone who hears it, and the FBI takes notice. So two days after he gives this speech, FBI domestic intelligence chief William Sullivan writes a memo and sends it to everybody. And it says, quote, "Personally, I believe in light of King's powerful demagogic speech, he stands head and shoulders over all other Negro leaders put together when it comes to influencing great masses. We must mark him now, if we have not done so before, as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this nation from the standpoint of communism, the Negro, and national security."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:42

So this is where we start busting that myth that most people liked Martin Luther King, and most people supported him. No, that was not the case. When he gave that powerful speech, they could see that change was coming. They could see that the horizon was bright for the civil rights movement, and they were not in favor of that. And so the Federal Bureau of Investigation targets him, and they consider him the most dangerous Negro. And that's a part of the story that is definitely untold.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:15

So from there, and that was in August of 1963. And in October of 1963, Bobby Kennedy, you know, this beacon of the civil rights movement, one of Martin Luther King's confidants and allies, authorizes the FBI surveillance of Martin Luther King, Jr. So he says, "Yep, I think we should wiretap him." And here's why: one of Martin Luther King's advisors, was a white man who had previously had ties to the United States Communist Party. So they were telling Martin

Luther King, you need to cut ties with this guy. He's a communist. And Martin Luther King hears their warnings, but he's kind of like, "I think that he's a great advisor, and I'm not gonna cut him off just for that." So they start to investigate him and they wiretap his offices, because they think that he's involved in communism. Now, it doesn't take them long to figure out that he has nothing to do with communism. And Martin Luther King Jr. actually wrote about communism. Many years earlier, in 1949, he read the "Communist Manifesto," and he came to this really strong conclusion about it, and he wrote it down. He said, quote, "I drew certain conclusions that have remained with me as convictions to this day. First, I rejected their materialistic interpretation of history, communism, avowedly secularistic and materialistic has no place for God." End quote. So Martin Luther King doesn't believe in communism, and he's not involved in communism at all. But while they're investigating him while they're wiretapping him, they find out that he is having extra-marital affairs.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 25:59

So this is kind of a sad, dark part of Martin Luther King's history of his life, that he made some bad choices. But I think that it's really important to talk about this side too, because it shows that he is a human being. A lot of times we look at our heroes as if they can have no faults, and then we find out some yucky things about them and we can't even view them as a hero anymore. And I still believe that Martin Luther King is a hero, even though this, I think, is a really terrible choice that he made to negatively affect his family in this way. So Martin Luther King is having extramarital affairs, and FBI taps his phones, and they find out about it, and then they begin to tap his hotel rooms. Now, this is a decision that Bobby Kennedy doesn't know about. So Kennedy says, as the attorney general, "Yes, I think that you need to tap his offices," but the FBI goes beyond that. And they begin wiretapping his hotel rooms, and collecting these audio tapes of him cheating on his wife.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 27:04

This was really heartbreaking to me to think of Bobby Kennedy and think of Martin Luther King and their relationship. I imagine Dr. King thought that Kennedy was one of his good friends, and he really trusted him. So for him to go and authorize these wiretaps is just absolutely beyond me. So you probably know that Bobby Kennedy was assassinated not long after Martin Luther King, Jr. And in 1976 — so after all of this is over, I'm kind of skipping ahead a little bit, because this is a really key detail — there is a Senate committee that's put together that's called the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activity. Now, that's a really big mouthful. But basically, this committee was researching the FBI and the CIA and kind of looking into their different investigations to see if what they were doing was lawful. This committee comes to the conclusion that, initially, they were wiretapping him to see if he had ties to the Communist Party. But then it morphed into a campaign to neutralize and discredit Dr. King. They say in their report that the FBI is programmed to destroy Dr. King, as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement entailed efforts to discredit him with churches, universities, and the press. And they actually interviewed William Sullivan. So remember, he's the chief domestic intelligence officer for the FBI, and the person who classifies Martin Luther King as the most dangerous Negro in the country. And so when he's interviewed by the committee, he says, quote, "No holds were barred. We have used similar techniques against Soviet agents, the same methods were brought home against any organization against which we were targeted. This is a rough, tough business." End quote. So if

you're thinking, "Oh, they really needed to figure out if he was a communist." You now know that they figured that out really quickly, and they shouldn't have been wiretapping him past that.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 29:08

So from there, the FBI decides to collect all of those audio tapes from his rendezvous with his mistresses in the hotel rooms. And they write him a letter, an anonymous letter. They don't say that it's from the FBI. And this letter is absolutely disgusting. It basically encourages him to take his own life. And it says that it has the audio tapes attached. And it says that if he doesn't do what they're telling him to do, then they're going to expose him to the world and release these tapes. And the person who actually finds the tapes, and the letter is his wife, Coretta.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 29:48

I can't read you the whole letter because a lot of it is pretty inappropriate. But I will read you a few quotes so that you can understand how intense and crazy psycho this letter was. They wrote from the viewpoint of a Black person. So they wrote as if they were not these white FBI agents, they wrote as if they were a Black person from the community, who had been, you know, tailing him and found this information and was sending him this letter. So they said, you know, "You're a complete fraud and a great liability to all of us Negroes. White people in this country have enough frauds of their own. But I'm sure they don't have one at this time, that is anywhere near your equal, King. Like all frauds, your end is approaching, you could have been our greatest leader. You even at an early age have turned out to be not a leader, but a dissolute abnormal immoral imbecile. King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do this exact number has been selected for a specific reason. It has definite, practical, significant, you are done. There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal, fraudulent self is bared to the nation."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:10

Now, there were some things in there that we're not grammatically correct. So I'm kind of stumbling over it because the letter was not written very well. Carter and I both agreed, we're like, they just repeat themselves over and over. And it's just really creepy. But I'm gonna put it in the show notes, if you're curious, and you want to read it for yourself. But it just floored me to see this relationship that he has with the Kennedys spiraled so quickly through the FBI and their surveillance. So soon after this, surveillance and the investigation start in 1963. And in October, John F. Kennedy is actually assassinated the very next month in November. And from there, Lyndon B. Johnson takes over the presidency. And he works to get John F. Kennedy's comprehensive Civil Rights Act passed. That's the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After all of those really violent civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s were happening, and they were being televised and people started to become outraged, Kennedy decided that civil rights was something that he would stand for. And that's when he says that it's legal, and it's moral, and that they need to come up with comprehensive legislation. So he's drafting this legislation, and then he gets assassinated. So Lyndon B. Johnson works really hard to get the legislation passed in honor of President Kennedy.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 32:36

So there is so much more to the story of Martin Luther King. Of course, there are all the times when his family was targeted. When his house was bombed. When he had assassination attempts — he was stabbed with a letter opener when he was signing books and he almost died, he had to go into surgery. They said that if it had been just a teeny bit in the other direction, he definitely would have died because it would have gone into his heart. If he would have sneezed, he would have died because it would have shifted and gone into his heart. It's really tough to think about all that he went through and all that his family went through. But I was sitting there thinking and just kind of frustrated by the idea that these people that he trusted, the Kennedys and the people that he loved, weren't even really on his side, either. Like he couldn't fully trust very many people around him. And I just kept wondering to myself, how did he not become so angry and so bitter? Because I feel like if that were me, I would just...I don't know what I would do. I might throw my hands up and say, "You guys stink, like, seriously, you really stink, I can't trust anybody. And I'm always in fear for my life and the lives of my wife and my children." Like, it's awful.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 33:54

And as I was reading that book that I mentioned at the beginning, "The Radical King," he lays it out. He lays out exactly how he avoids bitterness, and how he gets through the anger and the pain. And that is through his philosophy of non violence and love. While he's in college and graduate school, he's reading like crazy, all these different philosophers and theologians, and he comes to his philosophy of non violence. And there are six basic facts to nonviolent resistance and his structure, but I'm not going to go through all of them. There's just one that I really want to focus on. He talks about how nonviolent resistance fights against the forces of evil, and really fights in favor of justice and light. And at the center of nonviolent resistance is love. And he says that non violence not only avoids physical violence, but violence of the Spirit. He says, quote, "The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent, but he also refuses to hate him." End quote. I just really want you guys to read this because it is so good. And he talks about how non violence is not for the weak, it's not for people who are afraid of violence. It's for people who are strong and courageous. And then he goes into what it truly means to love your enemy through nonviolent resistance. And he talks about the three different Greek words for love.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 35:27

You may have heard this at church, because I know I've heard this in a sermon before, but I never thought about it in the lens of civil rights and standing up for justice. He talks about eros, which is romantic love. And that's not the love of nonviolent resistance. Then he talks about philia, which is love between a friend and this is reciprocal love, like we love because we are loved and our friends love us, and we love them back. And it's a very reciprocal relationship. But the third kind of love, which is the love of nonviolent resistance, this is agape. And agape is understanding, redeeming, goodwill for all men. He says it's the love of God operating in the human heart. The individual seeks not his own good, but the good of his neighbor. And he loves others for their sake, not his own. Because this love, agape, it springs from the need of the other person, not from your own. So basically, he's saying that agape is love in which you are loving someone with no expectation of love in return. And he actually talks about how

oftentimes agape is needed because you're actually going to be faced with hatred and oppression in return. But you have to be so grounded in agape, you have to be so grounded in love, that you know that that person needs your love more than anything. When talking about agape he says, "Since the white man's personality is greatly disordered by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred, he needs the love of the Negro. The Negro must love the white man because the white man needs his love to remove his tensions, insecurities and fears."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 37:18

Agape is not weak, passive love. It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community. And there are so many examples of agape in the Scriptures. And one of my favorite is in Matthew, chapter five, verse 44, where Christ says, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you." Now, Jesus and Martin Luther King are certainly not encouraging us to accept abuse in the name of agape; it's actually the complete opposite. Agape is holding people accountable for their words and their actions. Agape is exposing the shameful of racism and other injustices and the way that they function within our communities. And agape is calling people in so that they can learn and they can change. So I think that this is something that people get totally wrong about Martin Luther King. He was not saying, "love everybody and that means that you let them treat you however they want to and do whatever they want." He was saying, "Love people by holding them accountable, and creating true community with them, and loving them in spite of their oppression and their hatred for you."


J Jasmine Bradshaw 38:41

So I have learned so much from him and studying him and his life and his teachings. And I even feel closer to my savior, through learning about Martin Luther King, because I think that that is what Christ asks of us. And I hope that by being in this First Name Basis family you have had an opportunity to feel our love for you, both in the brotherly and friendship kind of way, but also in the agape type of way, where we are calling you to be better, calling you to rise up, and calling you to teach your children to be inclusive, so that we can have a better community. And I hope that you've also had an opportunity to practice agape in your own life. And I encourage you and I challenge you this week, especially to be thinking about how you can better exercise and better embrace agape.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 39:32

So what do you think? Don't you feel a little bit more peace? Don't you feel a little bit of courage to go and stand up for what's right? I really, really hope so. And if you're looking for some resources for how to teach your children about Martin Luther King Day, I made a whole episode about this last year. It's called "Three Ways to Celebrate Martin Luther King Day That Honor His Legacy." I will remind you that I made it before the pandemic so it talks about going to events, but you could totally have a Martin Luther King-inspired event in your home with your family in order to celebrate how he has inspired all of us to be better. And before we go, I have to remind you about Bite-Sized Black History, the new program that we are developing so that you can

teach your children about 12 Amazing black Americans from history. Go to firstnamebasis.org/bitesizeblackhistory, all one word, and sign up to be on the email list so that you can know exactly when it comes out and have access to that early bird pricing.

 Jasmine Bradshaw 40:40

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 or 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.