

3.28 A Real Life Anti-Bias Teachable Moment

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Three, Episode 28: "A Real Life Anti-Bias Teachable Moment."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:15
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 00:50
Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. Okay, I am working on an episode about critical race theory. I have heard from a gajillion of you that you need this episode in your life, and I am working on it. I have done so much research, so much reading, so much podcast listening, and I really am excited to share it with you because I think it will really, really help. But it's just not ready yet. So I wanted to give you a little something in the meantime to hold you over until that critical race theory episode is ready. But I promise it's coming.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:28
Okay. So I had a moment with Violet at the library last week, and I really want to share it with you because I feel like it was anti-bias teaching in the real world, like real time, real world, anti-bias teaching. And well, I guess what I'll say is that, it's not that I did it wrong the first time, it's

just that I took my time to collect my thoughts and figure out how I wanted to do it. And I wanted to share this experience with you to show you that that's okay if you don't do it right away. And you'll see what I'm talking about in just a minute.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:00

So here's what happened. We're at the library. We always go to the library on Mondays, and my little Violet loves Fancy Nancy. She is obsessed with Fancy Nancy, we watch Fancy Nancy all the time. She always plays Fancy Nancy when she's dressing up. And so at the library, the first thing that we do is make a beeline to the Fancy Nancy books. So she picks up one of these Fancy Nancy books, and she is the type of kiddo who wants to read at the library before we take the books home. She can't wait to crack them open. So we read them right there before we even put it in the bag to take your home. And so she pulls out a Fancy Nancy book and "I have it right here you might hear it crinkling around" it's called "Fancy Nancy: Budding Ballerina." So we sit at one of the library tables and open it up, and we're just reading it, and it's just about Fancy Nancy loves dancing. She's in a dance class. And then she wants to teach her dad how to dance. And so he starts taking dance lessons from her in their living room, right. And one of the pages says, "Dad is very prompt, he shows up right on time. 'Oh, I forgot my tutu,' he says. I giggle. He is just being silly. Only girls wear tutus!"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:11

Well, when I got to that page, I kind of read ahead, of course, as all adults do. I was skimming ahead to see what was coming next. And I saw that page. And we're in the middle of the library and I just stopped. I didn't read it. I skipped over that page and I just turned the page. She's not old enough to read yet. So she had no idea. So I just skipped from the page before to the page after and she had no idea. Because I knew that I wanted to talk to her about it. But I wanted to give myself a minute to figure out what I was going to say.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:41

And this is where I want to point out to you that you do not have to say something every time right in the moment. Now, if Violet was the one who had said something like, "Only girls wear tutus," that's when I do need to address it in the moment. But because she had no idea that this bias was even in the book "she didn't know I didn't read it out loud, she had no idea it was there" I could take a moment, figure out how I was going to present this information to her, how it was best I was going to communicate that this is a bias and this is not something that we believe and all of those different types of things. Because it's not that I should pretend like it's not in the book at all. Because if I do that, then she's going to come to other books where there is bias and she's not going to know what to do with it. So this is actually a fantastic learning opportunity for her. It's this is a character that I really love. This is a book that I think is so fun. And there's something unkind in this book, there is a bias in this book that I have to be careful of. Now she's going to come up against this a lot on her own when she does start reading on her own and when she's in class and when she's reading at a friend's house or anything like that, and I want her to be able to spot those things and point them out and really figure out, "What do I think about that? Do I believe that?" and be able to be anti-biased in those moments.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:57

So when we were at the library I skipped over, I just skipped over the page. And then I went home. And when she was sleeping that night, I went her room and I got the book and I read through it again, to kind of jog my memory of what it was about, and then decide, "Okay, how do I want to confront this?" So the next time that we were reading together, I took the book out, and I said, "I'm excited to read this book with you. And there's something in here that I want to talk to you about. When we get to the page that I want to stop and talk, I'll let you know that." she was like, "Okay," so we're reading, we're reading and then we get to the page about the two tutus and I said, "This page has something unkind on it, and actually has what's called a bias on it." Now, do I expect her to remember that word? Probably not. She's only three. But just introducing the language slowly but surely, she's going to catch on eventually, right? So I said, "This page has a bias on it. And I think you can probably figure out what it is." So I told her a bias is something that we hear but isn't necessarily true. And then I read it to her, I said, "'He's just being silly. Only girls wear tutus'." And I said, "Is that true? Is it true that only girls are allowed to wear tutus?" And she was like, "No." And I said, "Anybody can wear a tutu?" And she said, "Yeah, of course, everybody can wear tutus". And I said, "Sometimes when you're reading books, you'll find things in a book that's not necessarily true. And we have to be careful when we're reading certain books, because we don't want to believe those things are true when they're not." So we talked about how when we read the book next time, we will read that page, but we're gonna stop and say "No, that's not true." Because that will give her practice being anti-biased, being against that bias of the idea that only girls are allowed to wear tutus. So we read the book again later on, and I said, "I read the page." And I said to her, "Is that true? Is it true that only girls can wear tutus?" And she said, "No, anyone can wear tutus."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:55

So this is developing an anti-bias practice within my parenting and within my home, being able to point out this is where bias comes from, little things like this. Have I ever said to her only girls are allowed to wear tutus? No. But having this book in her environment is teaching her a lesson that I don't agree with, that doesn't align with the values of our family, our anti-racist, anti-bias family values. So it's taking the time to be aware of what is she learning. What is she reading? What is she hearing? And does that align with what we believe as parents and as a family?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 07:36

So I really wanted to share that experience with you. Because in one of the very first episodes of the podcast, I think it was episode one maybe, where I talked about how to talk to young children about race, I explained that children pick up ideas about race and pick up biases about race just based on their environment. A lot of times children are not explicitly taught to be racist, but their environment is what teaches them these racial biases. And if you remember, implicit bias, as defined by the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State University is, quote, "Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner." End quote. So all of us hold biases, and we are gaining these biases because of the environments that we're in, because of the media that we consume, because of

the people that we are around, because of the things that we learned in school. And our children are not immune to those biases. So when we see them coming up in their environment, in their reading, we have to be explicitly pushing against that. And that's what it means to be, in this case, anti-biased. And if it was a race-based bias, that is what it would mean to be anti-racist.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:57

And one other thing that I want to point out is that this book is not ancient. I think a lot of times we will brush things off saying, "Oh, well, that was such a long time ago," or "People don't think that way." Now, this book was written in 2013, which is not that long ago. And I can only imagine how many little children have read this book and internalized this bias that only girls wear tutus because of a book like this. And think about a boy who's sitting reading this book and thinking about how fun and lovely it might be to wear a tutu, and then reading that only girls wear tutus and thinking, "Oh man, I guess that's not something that I get to be a part of."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:35

So we have to cultivate this practice of anti-bias and anti-racist teaching for our children in our everyday lives. And when we're spending time with them, engaging in the things that they're engaging in, it's a really great opportunity to step in and set the record straight and teach your family values.


J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:56

So I hope that that was helpful to just hear me talk through it in my real life. And as you have heard, it wasn't anything big or scary. It was a really simple conversation, and then continuing to reinforce that conversation every time we read the book, and probably every time she puts a tutu on now we'll talk about it as well. One of the other things I wanted to mention is that if this is the kind of support and guidance that you are looking for, you can find it in our First Name Basis Patreon community. So our Patreon community is full of parents, teachers, caregivers, people who work with children who want to teach them to be anti-bias and anti-racist. And every single month, we have a monthly Q&A, where people can come and submit questions ahead of time or even ask them live, anything that you're confused about, anything that you're struggling with, maybe something that you need advice on. Maybe you saw this tutu line in the Fancy Nancy book and you weren't sure what to do. The amazing thing is that we cover all of that in our First Name Basis Patreon Q&A sessions.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:02

And the cool thing, I think, is that it's not just advice from Carter and me, it's advice from other parents in the First Name Basis community who are in the trenches with you. So if you are looking for support, you're looking for guidance on this journey with your children, or some children that you care for, some children that you serve, go to patreon.com/firstnamebasis. You'll be able to support our show, support the podcast, and also find an amazing community of parents who are really committed to this anti-racist work, committed to creating a more just

community for the kiddos that we love so much, and you know, for ourselves. So as I mentioned, I'm working on that critical race theory episode. I can't wait to share it with you; I think it will give you so much clarity. I think it will give you so much peace when it comes to figuring out how you feel about this topic and what you want to do about it and how to respond to people when they're talking about it. I know that it's coming up in your circles a lot. So just know that I'm working so hard on that and I cannot wait to get it into your little ears.

 Jasmine Bradshaw 12:10

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 @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.