

# 4.15 Anti-Racism is a Both/And Situation

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## SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

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J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Four, Episode 15: "Anti-Racism is a Both/And Situation."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:09

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 00:40

Hello, First Name Basis, fam. I am so glad you are here. Guess what, y'all: this is the last episode of Season Four! Can you even believe that? We are moving on to Season Five. We're taking a little break for the holidays, and then we will start Season Five on January 4th of 2022. First of all, how is it 2022? What in the world? So I'm so excited to be celebrating the end of Season Four with you. And I was wondering if you might do me a favor. As some of you might know, one of the best ways to help others find the podcast and enjoy the podcast is through leaving a review on Apple Podcasts. So if you are listening on Apple Podcasts, will you take a minute today to leave a review for First Name Basis? Just tell us, what do you like about the show? What would you love to hear more of? Give us your feedback; we want to hear it all. So all you have to do is, on your Apple Podcast app, search for First Name Basis, or, if you're already listening, you just scroll to the bottom of our page. And then there'll be an opportunity for you to click the number of stars out of five. So choose out of five stars how many you would love to give us, and then you can tap "Write a Review," and you can leave a review there. And I just have to say thank you so much. We have been on such a journey this season. We have gone from microaggressions to responding when our children say racist things to launching our

very first cohort of Ally Elementary families. It has been such a joy. I love my job. I love my job so much. I'm so grateful. And I have to tell you, the only reason I get to do this job is because you press play on the podcast. So thank you. Thank you. And I hope that you will leave a review. And if you're missing us, don't you worry; you can go back and listen to any of the old episodes. Sometimes I do that because I'm like, "I feel like I said something that I want to remember." And so I'll just hit play on one of those old episodes. But we will definitely be back on January 4, the very first week of January, we will have Season Five, Episode One.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:50

Alright, let's jump in. "Anti-Racism is a Both/And Situation." So for the last episode of this season, I took some time to reflect on the things that I've been feeling and experiencing over the past few months as we've been digging into Season Four. And I felt like maybe I could share some of my reflections with you because I feel like they might help if you're on this journey too. So let me tell you what I mean by a both/and situation: anti-racism is really a lifestyle. Like once you begin to see the world through this lens of race and anti-racism, there really is no going back. Have you noticed that? Like sometimes, in a great way, you're able to see all of these things that you feel like maybe we're hiding in plain sight, but sometimes it's hard, too. When I first began to learn about anti-racism, long before I started First Name Basis, I remember thinking, "I wish I could just turn it off sometimes and enjoy things." I felt like sometimes it was hard to see things that I had loved before and find joy in them, because I was just seeing all of the yuckiness that comes from living in a racist society. And I feel like this was a pretty clear sign that I was at the beginning of my journey. I was still pretty immature when it came to anti-racism. And what I've learned along the way is that it can't be one or the other. It can't be anti-racism or enjoyment. It is a both/and situation. It has to be anti-racism and enjoyment. It's critically important that we strive to be anti-racist and continue along our anti-racist journey. And we all deserve to find enjoyment in our lives. So it's okay to enjoy things, and to try to change them at the same time. That's what I mean by being a both/and situation. We have to be able to hold both of these things. We have to be able to look at things that maybe we've loved in the past and either let them go if they're too far gone, or try our best to change them while also being able to find enjoyment. I'm not sure if y'all have noticed this, but it is really tough to avoid everything that is racist. We live...I mean, I'm laughing. It's not funny. I'm laughing because it's so sad. It's one of those like, "laugh to keep from crying" type of things. But we live in a systemically racist society. So in order to avoid every single thing that was racist, we wouldn't be able to do much. And I don't even know if that's the point. Because our presence, like we talked about a couple weeks ago, around Thanksgiving time, our presence is important to make change.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:37

People will say to me all the time, "Why do you make everything about race?" Well, that's because everything is about race: the wealth of our country was built on enslaving Africans and stealing land from Indigenous peoples. So literally, everything is about race. Now, please don't think I'm saying that you can go and do blackface or something and be like, "Oh, yeah, I'm trying to enjoy and change." No, no, no, that's not what I'm talking about. You really do need to have some boundaries. And I think it's important to note that there are other activists that I look to and learn from who have boundaries that are more strict than mine, or boundaries that are different from mine. So it really is a personal piece of this journey. There are some things

that we say no to and just stay away from. And there are some things that we choose to enjoy, while also trying to change them. The thing is, I can't tell you what those things are for your family, those are boundaries that you're going to have to decide for yourself, based on your own values. I can share my family's boundaries with you, but at the end of the day, it has to align with your values, and it has to be something that you can stick to. So I'm just hoping that we've been on this journey for long enough together, that you feel empowered to make some of these decisions for your family. And if you're just starting, and maybe this is your first episode of First Name Basis, welcome. I'm so glad you're here, you have so many amazing episodes in the archives to help you figure out what those family values are and how you can develop boundaries that align with your family values. And I also think it's important to note that as you continue along this path of anti-racism, you might decide to change your boundaries, you might figure out that with your growth, you decide that there are things that you've been okay with or things that you've done in the past that you don't agree with anymore, and choose to let those things go. So just know that it's okay for your boundaries to change and develop as you grow.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 07:38

I want to give you some examples of some things that I enjoy, while also trying to make change. But before we jump into that, I really want to help you understand that, if what you take away from this episode is that nothing in your life needs to change, then there's probably something that you're missing. I've heard a lot of people say, "Oh, I've thought about it a lot," or "I've searched my heart, and I'm actually not racist." And that is just not realistic. So if that is where you're at, if that's what's coming up for you, then you probably don't know a whole lot about how racism works, and you have some learning to do. So I would recommend starting with our episode that's called "Racism 101." And I will be sure to link that in the show notes.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 08:24

Okay, let's get into the examples of times when I felt like "Oh, my goodness, I can see the issues with this, and I really want to change them, and I also deserve to have enjoyment in my life." So a couple of weeks ago I was just scrolling on Hulu, and I found that movie called "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days." It's with Matthew McConaughey and Kate Hudson, and I love this movie. I grew up watching this movie. It's like a comfort movie for me, right? And I won't tell you the whole synopsis or anything. But one of the important things to note so that you can understand where I'm coming from, is that Andy, the main character, she is the "How-To Girl" at the magazine that she works at. So she writes all of these different articles about how to do this and how to do that. So during the first five minutes of the movie, they're like trying to get us acquainted with what's going to happen in the movie, and they're giving us snapshots of different "how-to" articles that Andy has written. And one of the articles that she has written was called, "How to Talk Your Way Out of a Ticket." And I saw that and I was like, "Oh, okay, so we're starting right off with the white privilege." Because I have never thought about talking my way out of a ticket. I've thought about how to survive a ticket, how to survive a stop with the police, how to keep my kids alive during this situation. But I've never thought about talking my way out of it because I don't have that privilege. So I was watching it and I was like, "Okay, that's kind of frustrating," but I'm still watching and it ends with a little how-to montage with her reading the line from her latest article that she's written, and it's called "How to Bring Peace to Tajikistan." And she's reading the article to her friend, and she reads the final line and

it says, "and only then will the people of Tajikistan know true and lasting peace." And I was like, oh goodness, this is Saviorism. This whole thing reeks of Saviorism that this white woman who lives in, I think it's New York City, thinks that she can write an article about how to bring peace to a place where she's probably never been. So that was a little frustrating because I'm just trying to enjoy this movie. And there are all these issues of white saviorism and of white privilege. And I should add, if you're not sure what Saviorism is, I made a whole episode about it. It's called "Service Not Saviorism." And I will also link that in the show notes. But as I'm sitting there watching this movie, I have to decide to look internally and decide, "Okay, is this something that I'm going to enjoy while also trying to change? Or is this something that I'm going to leave behind." And I chose to enjoy the movie, because, as I've said, I have a few episodes where I'm speaking directly to these topics that are frustrating me, the things that I want to change. And so instead of turning it off, I thought, "I am doing important work to move the needle forward in these areas, and I'm going to choose to enjoy this movie."

### J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:23

So there are very specific actions that I'm taking in order to try to change the things that are frustrating me. Like I said, there are a few specific episodes that I've already made that can help people learn about these things. The first is "What is Privilege and What Do I Do With It?" The second is called "Can We Talk About White Privilege?" And the third is the one that I just mentioned, "Service Not Saviorism." And all of those will be in the show notes. So I'm really trying to help others recognize their privilege and to step out of their saviorism and embrace service instead. So because I'm taking those actions, I feel comfortable watching this movie on Hulu. Now there are people who will not agree with me, and that is absolutely okay. And I might listen to this episode in a couple years and be, like, "Cringe, Jasmine. Why would you do that? Turn the movie off," maybe. But where I'm at right now, I'm choosing to have enjoyment while also trying to change things.

### J Jasmine Bradshaw 12:18

Okay, so I have to tell you that sometimes these things are happening simultaneously. So while I'm watching this movie, I'm watching "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days" on Hulu, I was on my phone, looking for a place where we might be able to take family photos this year. And so I'm scrolling looking at all these different places. And there are so many beautiful places around Arizona, and I found this super cute little place that had beautiful flowers. Now I told you, I'm in Arizona, so there are so many cacti all around. And as beautiful as it is we've done that like a million times. So I really wanted to have something that was more floral. And I'm scrolling through their Instagram and looking at these beautiful families. And I get to a photo of a family who is posing with raw cotton, and that just stopped me in my tracks. Because to me, raw cotton is not something that's cute. It's not something that is to be used as decoration. I just feel like it's really inappropriate to take raw cotton and use it in that way, especially considering our country's history when it comes to cotton picking. So that is a boundary that I have, that I've chosen for myself and for my family. We don't do cotton decorations. I don't support stores that sell raw cotton as decorations, and I don't support places or companies that would allow families to pose for family photos in fields of raw cotton. I just feel like people don't understand the weight of that and how hard it is for people who have enslavement in their ancestry, to see people smiling and frolicking in raw cotton. And I think even if you aren't Black and don't have enslavement in your ancestry, you should understand the history of our country

and realize that that's just not something that's cute or appropriate. So all of this stuff is happening. At the same time. I'm watching the movie that I've chosen to enjoy while working for change in those areas. And I'm looking for a place for family photos and choosing to set that boundary and not have my photos in the flower fields. So can you see how all of it is so interconnected. You can be enjoying yourself in one moment and then choosing to set a boundary in the very next moment. It is always keeping our values at the front of our mind. So that when these moments are coming up, we can make a decision that we feel good about, and we feel like we can take it back to our families and they're going to support us as well, because we are all sharing those values together.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 14:45

Okay, let me give you another example of a both/and situation. I actually haven't decided how I feel about this one. So I'm going to tell you my thinking so that you can kind of understand what goes through my head as I'm trying to make these decisions. This one really could be its own episode. But I have condensed it down for our conversation today. So let's talk about "Hamilton." Oh my, I'm a little nervous, because I'm sure there are some "Hamilton" lovers out there. But I have to tell you that I have some issues with "Hamilton." Now I was really excited about "Hamilton" because everyone was freaking out. I'd heard about it for so long. And then last year, it came out on Disney+ so I was like, "Oh, I'm so excited. I can watch this movie or play," I guess. And I really enjoyed the music. I've listened to it. And I think it's really cool and fun and hip-hoppy, which is great. And I was watching it and just feeling like, "Okay, I cannot be the only person who's frustrated watching this play." Because to me, it seems really extremely, completely irresponsible to have an entire play that is about the founding of the United States and completely leave out Indigenous peoples. Erasure is a huge function of oppression when it comes to Indigenous peoples and what they're facing. And so to be watching this entire play that's talking specifically about how the United States was founded, and all the important people and the important actors and the important places and things that happened, for them to leave Indigenous peoples out was like, "No, no, no, no, no, no. That's not cool." So I was watching it feeling so incredibly torn, because I love the music. I really want to support these Black and brown actors and actresses in this play. But how how can we do this and act like it's okay to completely leave out Indigenous peoples?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 16:43

The other parts that were really frustrating to me, there's a part where Angelica Schuyler, she is the black woman with the curly hair, one of the Schuyler Sisters, she's the one who is in love with Hamilton, but he ends up marrying her sister Eliza. So she's singing about being a Schuyler sister. And one of the things she says is, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. And when I meet Thomas Jefferson, I'm a compel him to include women in the sequel." And everyone is like cheering and freaking out at that line right there, like, "Oh, yay, women in the sequel!" But I'm looking at this woman. She's a black woman, I'm assuming. I guess I shouldn't say that. I'm assuming she's a black woman. She might be Afro-Latina, but she's visibly brown. And I'm thinking, "Yeah, I would like for women to be included in the sequel. But what about Black people?" How can we specifically talk about women and leave out this entire group of people who are currently enslaved. Looking at these people who are playing parts of white people, when they would have been enslaved at this time is just...it's just...it's really hard for me. Another lyric that I really am frustrated with is when they say, "Immigrants,

we get the job done." That's another part that everybody loves to quote and freak out about. And I feel like, "Yes, I love the sentiment. Immigrants are amazing, and they do get the job done. But are you all immigrants? Or are you all colonizers?" Because I feel like the people who were involved in the founding of the United States are not immigrants. They are colonizers, and we need to call them as such. So do you see why I'm thinking I could have a whole episode on this? Those are just my top three criticisms of "Hamilton." But I could definitely keep going. It just felt really gross to me to have Black and brown people telling these white stories. And these white stories that almost entirely left us out and painted in slavers and colonizers as heroes. Like, yuck.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 18:44

So after it came out on Disney+ everyone was talking about it on Instagram. And there was one woman who said, "Hey, I'm just wondering if anybody else had mixed feelings about "Hamilton," because I felt really torn watching it." And I was like, "Yes, me. Oh, my gosh." So I shared a few of the thoughts that I just shared with you. And one of the things I said was, "I just wonder if it would have been as successful if he were telling the stories that centered on Black and brown people." And someone came back who was a Hamilton head (I don't know if that's a real thing. I just made that up), just someone who loved Hamilton. And they came back and they were like, "Well, he has, and they are super successful. He's totally made those stories." But here's the thing: I'm not a theatre buff. I love musicals. It's so fun. But I'm not the kind of person who keeps up with everything that's going on in the world of theater. So I don't know the show super well. But I do know "Hamilton." So if she was right, if he really had made these stories about Black and brown people, and they were as successful as "Hamilton," don't you think I would know about it? Right? Wouldn't I know about that story if it was just as successful as Hamilton as someone who isn't super into theatre. So I shared that with her and she wasn't excited to hear my response as you can imagine, and this was all before "In the Heights" came out. Now I am an "In the Heights" lover. I think it was amazing and so cool. I love to watch and I love to listen to the music.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 20:10

But while all of this was happening, I remembered this interview that I heard with Toni Morrison. So if you're not sure who Toni Morrison is, she is a Black author, and she wrote some amazing books. And all of her books are centered on Black people. She tells Black stories about Black people. And in this interview that came to my mind, she's interviewed by this British journalist, her name is Jana Wendt, and I will link the interview in the show notes if you're interested in listening to it. But Jana says to Toni Morrison, she says that [Morrison] has marginalized whites in her writing. And she says that because Toni Morrison doesn't write about white people, that means that she is marginalizing white people. Now, Toni Morrison could totally have had an attitude, because that white interviewer absolutely deserved it. But she doesn't. She responds super graciously. And she says that it was just really important to her that her primary readership was Black people. And she gives the example of Black music. She says, "I always write my stories for Black people and if other people like it, that's great." She talks about how Black music is created by Black people and for Black people, and the fact that so many other people enjoy Black music is just an added bonus. So that's when the interviewer, Jana, she can't let it go. And she presses Toni Morrison more, and she asks, quote, "And you will maintain this safe place for yourself and for your art? You don't think you will ever change and

write books that incorporate white lives into them substantially?" End quote. And that's when Toni Morrison responds and says, "I have done that." And the interviewer interrupts her and asks, "In a substantial way?"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 21:55

And this is when Toni Morrison takes an opportunity to call this white interviewer in. And she says, "You can't understand how powerfully racist that question is, can you? Because you could never ask a white author, "When are you going to write about Black people?" Even the inquiry comes from a position of being in the center and being used to being in the center." End quote. So from there, the interviewer backs off a little bit. And I just remember thinking after I saw "Hamilton" and had that exchange with someone on social media about how I felt about it, I remember thinking, "Oh man. I wish Toni Morrison were here. I wish she were here to tell us what she thinks about 'Hamilton'." Because the sense that I got from the interview is that she would not be happy or excited that there are Black and brown people who are using their amazing talent, their amazing dance skills, their musicality, their voices, their acting, to tell stories about white people. To center white people once again and use our Black and brown talent to do so...it almost felt like a weird way of appropriation. I don't know. It just made me so uncomfortable.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:08

So I'm thinking about that. I'm talking to Carter about it. And he was telling me, "well I think she might have been alive when "Hamilton" came out. Why don't you look?" I googled it, of course. (This is almost like an untold story episode!) So I googled, and I'm researching it, and I found out that she had quite a bit to say about "Hamilton." And she actually decided to invest in a response play to "Hamilton." So there's a play that's called "The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda." It's written by a man named Ishmael Reed. And it's a response to "Hamilton." So it is about the real stories of what was going on at the time. It includes the enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. And it turns out that Toni Morrison was the second-biggest contributor to the play, so much so that she even let them practice in her apartment. So she has an apartment in New York City, and they needed a place to practice. And she says, "Come on over to my house and practice your anti-Hamilton play." She gives her money, she gives him an opportunity to practice, and that was kind of all I needed to know to understand what she thought about "Hamilton."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:19

Now I was reading a couple of interviews with Ishmael Reed. He's the writer of "The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda." And the quote that really stuck out to me was that he said, quote, "They cast Black people in order to defend projects that Black people might find objectionable. It sort of distracts from the racism of the white historical characters." End quote. Then he goes on to say, quote, "I draw attention to what was left out of 'Hamilton' by giving speaking parts to those who are left out of the narrative." End quote. So I was just really grateful to find this guidance from Toni Morrison, who is now an ancestor. She's since passed away. And I just felt like "Okay. She is leaving this legacy for us to find so that we can make decisions in our own life about what we value and where we're going and the things that we participate in." So I'm really

grateful to that ancestress for her wisdom and her knowledge that I was able to find just when I needed it. But even so, I haven't really been able to make a decision quite yet. I don't know if "Hamilton" is something that I want to enjoy while trying to change, or if it's something that I just want to let go of. I'm not really sure. But I share this example with you to help you see that it can be complicated, and it can take a while to make a decision. And you can truly enjoy the music of "Hamilton," while also feeling like, "Man. There are some really messed up things about this play."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:51

So I hope that these examples were helpful when it comes to understanding that we're making these decisions all the time. And sometimes they're easy, like choosing to watch the movie "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days," choosing to enjoy it while also trying to change the things that I saw in it. And then choosing to stay away from that venue of flowers where the families were posing with raw cotton. Those are pretty easy decisions. But then you come to this "Hamilton" situation, and I'm just not sure yet. And I'm still trying to figure it out. So just know that when you're making these decisions, some of them are going to be easy, some of them are going to be a little bit harder. I hope you have somebody that you trust to talk through this with and figure out what feels best for you and your family.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:36

One thing that I want to add is that working for change is going to look a lot different based on what privileges you hold. So if you are someone who holds white privilege, if you're someone who's white, you've probably received messages your entire life that enjoyment and comfort are something that you deserve most of the time. And if you're someone who is a Black Indigenous person of color, you've probably learned from a young age that your enjoyment might be hindered. Because you'll constantly be fighting for dignity and respect. So I really want you to take a minute and consider your privilege when you're choosing what to enjoy and what to forego. If you're a person who holds white privilege, you really need to build your stamina for discomfort. And you need to choose not to participate in some things that you enjoy in order to stay true to your values and be in solidarity with Black Indigenous people of color. But if you are a Black or brown person, and there is something that you are choosing to enjoy, because you know that this system of oppression has taken so many different pieces of enjoyment from your life already, go for it. I am here for it, and I support you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 27:45

Here's the thing, y'all, I've been feeling pretty discouraged lately. And I know I've shared this with a few of you when we were talking about Ally Elementary because I was talking specifically about how I've been trying really hard to cultivate hope in my life. But this episode is as much for me as it is for you. It is a reminder to myself that I really do deserve enjoyment like anyone else in this life, anyone else on this earth. I deserve enjoyment, and I have a responsibility. So holding those things at the same time can be tricky. It is a both/and situation. And it's okay to change your mind and change your boundaries based on the growth that you're making. I want to end this season, Season Four, with the quote that I cling to on my toughest anti-racist days. And if you've been here for more than five seconds, you have heard me say this quote before,

but I don't think we can hear it enough. It is a quote by John Lewis, and he says, "Don't get lost in the sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month or a year. It is the struggle of a lifetime. Never ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble." End quote. And with that, I will leave you; I will end Season Four. I can't believe I'm saying that! Please remember to leave a review on Apple Podcasts if that is where you're listening. Click the stars and then click "Write a Review" and tell us what you think about First Name Basis. I love you so much. And I will talk to you again for the first episode of Season Five on Tuesday, January 4.

 Jasmine Bradshaw 29:28

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](mailto:hello@firstnamebasis.org). All right, have a great week my friends, and I will talk to you again soon.