

4.9 Is Reverse Racism Real?

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Four, Episode Nine, Is Reverse Racism Real?

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 00:50
Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. All right, we have to talk about reverse racism, because I have heard from like four or five people in the past two weeks about reverse racism. What is it? Is it real? How do I respond to it? So I figured we should just break this down together.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:11
I'm sure all of you have been in a situation where someone has claimed reverse racism. So let's talk about it and figure it out. But before we do, I have to tell you "Ally Elementary is one week away. Can you even believe? Can you even believe it!? Ally Elementary will be launching on October 26, next Tuesday" on podcast day "and Ally Elementary is our brand new program for families. This is an anti-racist education program for you and your kiddos. And what you'll be doing is, you'll sit down on the couch, you'll snuggle up together, you'll press play on the pre-recorded videos that I've created for you, and you will learn about some of the most important aspects of being an ally. I have created this program for you to either kickstart your anti-racist journey or continue the journey that you are already on. So we will start by talking about melanin and differences. We'll get started kind of slow and steady. And then each lesson builds on the one before it. And we'll end with talking about anti-racism and privilege and systemic racism and what it looks like in our lives and how we can respond. It's going to be so exciting. I cannot wait

to see the transformation that your family goes through as you have these really important conversations together. And I've heard from so many of you that you love to listen to the show, and you have so many takeaways from the things that I share, but when it comes to sitting down and actually having these convos with your kids, you really want some hands-on guidance. And that's what Ally Elementary will be for you.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 01:16

So in order to celebrate the launch of Ally Elementary, I am going to be teaching a free class. It is called Ally ABCs: Three Simple Ways to Embed Anti-Racism Into Your Family Culture. And what we'll do is we will talk about three ways that you can make sure that your values of inclusion and justice and anti-racism are being taught and lived out in your home. And this class is completely free and it'll be online, and there are actually three different times and dates that you can choose from. I'll be teaching one on Tuesday, October 26, at 7pm; one on Wednesday, October 27 at 5:30pm Pacific Time, I should say and one on Tuesday, November 2 at 7pm Pacific Time. If you're interested, go to [firstnamebasis.org/free class](https://firstnamebasis.org/free-class). I will also put the link in the show notes. But come spend some time with me and figure out how you can make this plan for you and your family to really incorporate anti-racism into your family values. That link one more time is [firstnamebasis.org/free class](https://firstnamebasis.org/free-class). So go and choose the time of day that works best for your schedule, and then sign up for a class. I can't wait to see you. One of my very favorite things is when we get to hop on zoom together and I can like see your face and talk to you in the chat or hear your voice. Maybe I'm just really, really excited. So come to the free class, Ally ABCs: Three Simple Ways to Embed Anti-Racism Into Your Family Culture.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 04:30

All right, let's talk about reverse racism. So I've heard from so many of you, as I mentioned, that you have either talked to a white person who says that they've experienced reverse racism, or maybe you are a white person who thinks that you've experienced reverse racism. The first thing that I want to say is that if something happened to you, if discrimination, race-based discrimination happened to you and you're white, I just want to say that I'm sorry. I'm really sorry that happened to you, I'm sure that it hurt. Whenever someone says or does something that is unkind, uncalled for, anytime anyone is treating another person badly, that is always wrong. And I just wanted to make space for the pain that you probably experienced when that happened. But what I want to do today is work together to see if we can figure out if what you experienced was racism, or if you should be calling it something else.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 05:31

So let's start by getting on the same page when it comes to the terms that we use to talk about different situations. So first, we're going to break down bias, prejudice, and discrimination, and then we will dive into racism. So bias is prejudice in favor or against one thing, person, or group, compared with another, usually, in a way considered to be unfair. Now, that was kind of a mouthful. That's the one that I found online. But I wanted to share with you the definition that I developed for Ally Elementary. So one of the things that I did when I was creating Ally Elementary was I was thinking back in my teacher brain (do you guys know that I used to be a teacher? I was a second grade teacher.) and one of the biggest challenges and it's actually kind of a fun challenge one of the most fun challenges that we get to do as teachers is figure out how to take these big, important concepts and break them down in a way that our kiddos will understand them, and remember them, and really have them nestle into their heart and into their mind. So I worked for a while on developing definitions for these big complicated concepts like bias, prejudice, and power.



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Jasmine Bradshaw 06:44

So I want to share with you the definition that I developed for bias. And let me tell you, even though this is a definition for the kiddos, I think it's really for us too, because it's just easier when I have something that I feel like I can get my arms around. So a bias is when we have strong opinions about people, places or things, even if we don't have very much personal experience with them. So this is when you don't know very much about something or someone, but you have an opinion about it anyway. And if you are a parent, I'm sure you have experienced a bias in your children, when it comes to the food that they eat. I feel like this is a really good example of bias because we've all been there right? Where our kiddos don't want to eat something. Even though they've never tried it, they think they have this huge idea in their mind of what it's going to be like, even though they've never even taken a bite of it. So a bias is when you have an opinion on something, but you don't really know very much about the person or the thing that you've developed that opinion on. And the hard thing about biases is that they can easily lead to prejudice.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 07:56

So let's move into talking about prejudice. Prejudice is pre judgment about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs. Prejudice consists of thoughts and feelings, including stereotypes, attitudes, and generalizations that are based on little or no experience, and then are projected onto everyone from that group. Again, that is quite the mouthful. So let me share with you the definition that I use in Ally Elementary: prejudice is when we think that we know what someone is like on the inside, based on what they look like on the outside. And I actually heard this definition when I was watching a news segment with two anti-racist educators named Megan Madison and Jessica Ralli. And I thought they just did such an amazing job. When you think you know what someone is like on the inside based on what they look like on the outside.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 08:52

When it comes to bias and prejudice, a lot of these things are happening inside our heads. Let me give you an example. This is like when you're driving in the car, and somebody cuts you off or makes a bad decision while they're driving, and then you pull up next to them. You look in the window and you see them and you think, "Oh, of course they're a bad driver, they are a 'fill in the blank.'" And your mind probably filled in the blank with a couple of things immediately. When I said that, your mind probably filled in the blank with, "Oh, of course they're a bad driver; they're a woman." I've heard that one. Or, "Oh, of course they're a bad driver; they are Asian." I've heard that one too. So these are things that we need to work to undo within our own minds, unlearn these prejudices and these biases that we have internalized. So prejudice and bias is happening inside our head. And we don't usually know which prejudices people are holding against us until it turns into discrimination.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 09:54

So discrimination is action that is based on prejudice. And examples of discrimination include ignoring, exclusion, threats, ridicule, slander, and violence. And it's important to understand that anyone is capable of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. So if you are a white person, and you have experienced name calling, threats of violence, exclusion from people of color, based on the color of your skin, then yes. You've experienced racial discrimination. You've experienced racial prejudice. You've experienced racial bias. And all of those things are wrong. People of color should not be doing that. But you have not experienced racism. So the short answer to the question "does reverse racism exist" is no. And let's break it down. Because I'm sure you're like, wait, wait, tell me why. Right?

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Jasmine Bradshaw 10:57

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Jasmine Bradshaw 10:57

So racism is prejudice plus power. Now I have a whole episode about racism, and the three different components of racism and how they work. It's called Racism One-Oh-One. It's Season Three, Episode Nine, and I will link that in the show notes. But I'm going to move forward with the understanding that you believe that systemic racism is real, and that it's something that we need to do something about, right? So racism is prejudice plus power. A lot of people think that racism is discrimination based on race. But that's only part of the definition; that's the prejudice piece of the definition. But it really becomes racism when you add the power piece. And when we're thinking about power, we are looking at the people in our society who get to make the decisions, the people who get to make the rules, and the people who get to enforce the rules. That's another definition from Ally Elementary, I should add.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 12:02

So the people in our society who hold the most power are the ones who make the decisions, make the rules, and enforce the rules. And we've talked before that the people in our society who hold those positions are overwhelmingly white people. And that is why racism is systemic, because there are so many systems in our society that are being controlled, and decisions that are being made, by people who are white. There's never been a situation in which Black people have held enough power to really make long term decisions that disadvantage white people as a whole. And I don't think that even if Black people got that power, that that's what they would want. I can tell you, as someone who's Black, we do not want revenge. We just want justice. But let's talk about some specific examples. Because I can feel that maybe you're a little bit confused about how you might explain this to someone else. So when we hear a situation or look at a situation, when we're trying to figure out whether or not it's racism or discrimination, prejudice, or bias, we have to figure out, can we pull out the pieces of prejudice and the pieces of power. If it's just prejudice, then it's probably discrimination. But if there's a power component to it, that's when it transforms into racism.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 13:25

So let me give you an example that we've probably all heard and are familiar with, I'm sure you know who John Lewis was, he was an amazing civil rights leader, one of my very favorites. And he worked together with a group of Black activists, other Black civil rights leaders, to stage sit-ins at the lunch counters. So as you know, during the Jim Crow era, one of the segregation laws was that Black people were not allowed to sit at the same lunch counters as white people and enjoy their food. So one of the tactics of nonviolent resistance was John Lewis and other Black activists would go into these restaurants and sit at lunch counters. Well, we all know, we've all seen the pictures of what happened to them, as they were engaging in these protests. So the white people there would pull them out of their seats, they would violently hit them, spit on them, blow smoke into their faces, tell them to get out of there. And of course, it would always end with the white people calling the police. The police would come to the establishment, the police would violently remove the protesters, and they would take them to jail. John Lewis was in jail many times for the protests that he participated in, even though he did not react to the violence and the threats. So when we're looking at this situation, let's pull out the prejudice and the power. The prejudice in this situation is that white people did not believe that Black people should be allowed to sit in the same restaurant as them and enjoy their lunch. The power in this situation is that they were able to violently hurt these people without facing any consequences. And they were able to call the police to have the Black activists removed.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 15:16

So if we look at "reverse racism," (and I'm doing air quotes here), if we think about what "reverse racism" would look like, it would mean that Black people would have the same amount of power in that situation in order to enforce their own prejudices if they were holding them. So let's reverse that and think about what that would look like. So

during the 1960s, during Jim Crow segregation, if there were a group of Black people who decided that they held prejudice against white people, they didn't want to eat by white people, and they think those white people should be removed, what do you think would have happened if they called the police? Would the police come and violently remove the white people and take them to jail? Absolutely not! Absolutely not. They would have been like, "Why are you calling us?" you know? "You shouldn't be calling us." And they would probably take the Black people to jail for discriminating, right? So that power piece is missing. When Black people exhibit prejudice or discrimination, the power of the system, the people who make the decisions, the people who make the rules, and the people who enforce the rules, is not on their side. And racism is prejudice plus power. So Black people have never had that type of power, and that's why reverse racism is not real.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 16:37

Let's break down another example. So I'm sure that you have all heard of the residential schools that Native American children were forced to live in after they were kidnapped from their parents by the government. They were taken away and they had their hair cut, which was extremely sacred to them. And they often experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Many children were murdered and died. And we have been seeing so much of that become uncovered lately. I mean, I live in a place where one of the streets is called Indian School. Like, this is history that is so close to my home. So when we think about that situation, let's look at it and see if we can pull out the prejudice and the power. The prejudice is that white people thought that Indigenous Peoples needed to assimilate and needed to be taught the quote, unquote, "right way to live," or the "right way" to be an American. And the power here is that the government literally showed up on their doorsteps to kidnap their children and take them away. And when the parents protested and said, "Don't take my kids! Do not kidnap my children, or take them away from me," they were threatened with violence, and they were threatened with withholding of their rations of food and other resources that they needed to survive. So let's see if we can reverse this situation, and decide whether or not it would be reverse racism. So if there was a group of Indigenous peoples who didn't want white people to live on their land, and thought that the best way to control them was by taking their children away and putting them into a school far away from their parents, far away from their culture, and making them assimilate violently, making those white children assimilate to their Indigenous standards and their Indigenous cultural values, what would happen? That wouldn't happen, right? Like, there's no way that would happen. There's no way that Indigenous peoples would have been able to enforce that, because they don't have the power to enforce that prejudice. And that's why we can see that reverse racism is not real, because it doesn't have the necessary components to be called racism, because racism is prejudice plus power. It has the prejudice piece, but it doesn't have the power piece.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 19:01

Okay, let me share one last example with you. And this one has to do with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Now we all know that he was very integral in the Montgomery bus boycott. Now I have a whole episode about the bus boycott. And it's actually one of my favorite episodes, because it is absolutely fascinating. The time and energy and planning that went into this boycott, it is Season Two, Episode Seven. It's called The Untold Story of Rosa Parks. So I will put that in the show notes if you want to listen to it. But Martin Luther King, he is a big integral piece of the bus boycott. And the white community knew this. And so he actually got in pretty big trouble. He had to go to court, because there was this law from 1921, and it said that it was quote "prohibiting conspiracies that interfered with lawful business." End quote. So Martin Luther King gets indicted over this 1921 law, and basically they say, "You're causing issues, the bus boycott is bad for our businesses. And so you're in trouble." He was tried and he was convicted, and he was charged \$500 or 386 days in jail. So he could pay this giant fine, or he could spend over an entire year in jail. And on top of that, he also had to pay court fees. So Dr. King had this really important value. And this was to make sure that he was not putting money into the system that was hurting him, his family, and everyone else in the Black community. So he didn't want to pay these court fees and this fine of \$1,000 to the government. And so what happened was, he was trying to decide if he was going to pay or if he was going to go to jail for over a year. And

basically, the people in the movement, the other civil rights leaders, and all of the people who were involved in the nonviolent protests, were like, "We really need you. Please don't go to jail for a year," so he did end up paying the fee. So this is a really good example of how the law, even though it doesn't necessarily specifically talk about race, can be used in a racist way to control and oppress Black Indigenous People of Color. So this law says you can't be involved in conspiracies that interfere with lawful business, and everyone was just not taking the buses, but it was making a huge impact on the local economy in the south. So the prejudice here is that Black people should not be able to move and organize in a way that negatively affects the white community, especially economically. That's the prejudice. And the power piece is that they were able to take him to court and convict him and make him pay \$1,000 and threaten him with jail time. So if the situation was reversed, if there were white people who were boycotting a Black business, and the Black community wanted to take this group of white people, or the leader of the group, to court and have them put in jail, it just, we all know. We all know how the court system works. That just would not happen. So a third example of why reverse racism is not real, why reverse racism does not exist.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 22:26

I hope that that is helpful when you're thinking about the conversations that you're having with the people around you, or even the experiences that you're having yourself. And of course, I want to say again, that if you are a white person, and someone has called you a name, or done something violent or hurt you in some way because of the color of your skin, I want to say that I'm sorry. That is not okay. That is absolutely discrimination and racial prejudice, but it is not racism. So next time that you see a situation, and you're wondering if this is racism or not, just take a minute and see if you have those two components. What's the prejudice here, and is there a power piece that goes along with it? Now I have to tell you, again, that these examples that I gave to you, two out of the three examples are things that we talk about in Ally Elementary, so I gave you the adult version of this lesson. And inside Ally Elementary, I really break it down into bite-sized digestible pieces for our kiddos. And you might be wondering, okay, "What age group is Ally Elementary good for?" Well, it is perfect for, I would say, third graders all the way up to seventh and eighth graders. We want our kids to be developmentally ready for these conversations. And so I think it's really for our kiddos that are a little bit older and ready to dig deep and figure out what it means to them to hold this value of antiracism and act on it. So if you are a parent who knows that you want anti-racism to be a piece of your family values, I really want to see you in that free class. It's Ally ABCs: Three Simple Ways to Embed Anti-Racism Into Your Family Culture. And we all work together to make a plan, make a plan so that you can find some space in your life, to embrace anti-racism together and to go on this journey as a family. So if you want to sign up for the free class, it is firstnamebasis.org/freeclass, and I will put that link in the show notes. And don't worry if you can't make it live, because I'm going to send out a replay link to all of the classes, all three of them. As I said, one of them is on Tuesday, October 26, one of them is on Wednesday, October 27, and then the last one will be on Tuesday, November second. All right, my friends. I can't wait to talk to you next week for the launch of Ally Elementary. I can't wait to see you in the free class if you're going to come. I hope this episode has been helpful. I love you so much. And I know we can do this.

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Jasmine Bradshaw 25:03

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.

