

5.3 Transcript Stop Using MLK to Justify Racism

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Five, Episode 3: "Stop using Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Justify Racism."
- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:16
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 00:57
Oh my goodness, my friends. This is our third Martin Luther King Day episode! Can you even believe that? The first was "The Untold Story of Dr. Martin Luther King." The second was "The One Thing I Wish You Knew About Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." and this one is "Stop Using Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Justify Racism." I have heard from so many of you that one of the most frustrating things is that when you're trying to have a conversation about anti-racism, people are coming at you with arguments against racial progress, and they're using Dr. King to justify what they're saying. Oh my.Yikes. So I'm really excited to share this episode with you. We are going to be breaking down three of the most common myths that I hear people saying in order to justify their racism using Dr. King.
- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 01:51
As I was sitting down to create this episode, I was like, "This is so cool that we've been doing this for such a long time that we have three different episodes to look to." And I feel like they

really mirror Dr. King's path as he developed into the civil rights leader that we know him as today. The book that I use very most for every single one of these episodes is a book called "The Radical King." And Dr. Cornel West, he took a bunch of Dr. King's speeches, and he put them in order chronologically. He picked out some that were really, really impactful and influential and gave us a good idea of what Dr. King was thinking and feeling at the time. And he put them in order. So the cool thing about reading this book is that you see how he starts off, and you see his progression to something that's a little bit more radical than you would think, based on what you've probably been taught in school, or what you heard on the news and all of that stuff. So that's why it's called "The Radical King," because Dr. Cornel West was trying to help people understand that Dr. King was extremely radical, especially for his time, but even today. And so it's really amazing to read His words and to see that progression. And I feel like that progression mirrors the progression that we've taken. Because in that first episode, "The Untold Story of Dr. King," I really focused on his theories of non-violence and loving accountability, and holding each other to our values. In the second episode, I talked a lot about the fact that racism and Dr. King's assassination have more to do with money and power than they have to do with skin color. And in this third episode, we are going to be dispelling three of the myths that people have perpetuated about Dr. King to justify their racism. So I think it's so cool to look back on those episodes and see how they've progressively gotten more radical, and how we on this journey as a community have gotten more radical in our ideas, and our actions about what it looks like to be anti-racist in our everyday lives and in our own community. So I'm so excited to share this episode with you today.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:06

Before we start, I have to tell you--oh my goodness--February is almost here! And you know what February is: February is Black History Month! Which means season two of Bite-Sized Black History. Can you even believe it? I'm so excited! Okay, so if you weren't here for season one, let me tell you about Bite-Sized Black History. It is a program that I have created for you so that you can have a meaningful Black History Month celebration in your home or in your classroom. Bite-Sized Black History is full of twelve different Black Americans that have been overlooked by our history books. So I really go digging and try to find people that maybe you've never even heard of. Or if you have heard of them, you only know their name or are not quite sure who it is. I find so many cool people from so many different walks of life. This season, we are highlighting newscasters and figure skaters, inventors, doctors, psychologist pilots--there are so many cool people in the lineup this year. And what I do is, I do all the research, and then I create many bite-sized podcast episodes that are just for kids. So there are twelve podcast episodes that are ten minutes or less, and each one highlights a different Black American from history. And along with the podcast, you get a booklet with a custom illustration of the person that you're learning about, so your kiddos can color while they're listening to the podcast episode. And then I have reflection questions so that you can snuggle up together and have really deep meaningful conversations about the people that you learned about and about their values and about how that aligns with who you are and what you want to do moving forward as you're honoring these Black Americans and celebrating Black History Month. It is probably one of my favorite things I get to do all year because it is so joyful for me.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:04

One of the hardest things about Black History Month growing up was the focus on enslavement and civil rights, because it just felt like being Black meant struggle. And as much as it does--

there is a lot of struggle and being Black--being Black also means joy and magic and excitement and happiness and brilliance and all these amazing things that I want to share with you. So if that sounds amazing to you, or if you're like, "Yes, I already knew all that because I am back for season two, go to firstnamebasis.org/bsbh. that just stands for "Bite-Sized Black History." It's firstnamebasis.org/bsbh. And you can put in your email and your name, and what we will do is we will send you sneak peeks, and we will send you a coupon code as soon as it's available. So Bite-Sized Black History will be here on February 1, and you'll get a coupon code sent straight to your inbox so that you can invest in a meaningful Black History Month celebration for you and your family. Or you and your classroom, if you are a teacher. I am so stoked.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:12

All right friends, let's break this down three myths about Dr. King that people use to justify their racism. The first myth is you think you know how Dr. King felt about riots; the second myth is Dr. King would be against Critical Race Theory; and the third myth is that his dream has already been achieved. Now before we jump into the first myth, I have to give a trigger warning. You know that I do this every episode. But I think it's a really good reminder, because for all my Black and Indigenous People of Color out there, I love you. And I want you to take good care of yourself. So if this is something that you can't hold or carry today, please do not worry. I just want you to have the support that you need.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:03

The other thing I wanted to say is that I will be reading a lot of quotes, because like I told you, the main text that I use for all of my Martin Luther King episodes are his own words from the book, "The Radical King," the compilation of his speeches. And in his speeches, he uses words and phrases that are outdated. So in his speeches he says "Negro," and in his speeches he uses the term "handicapped." Now we know that those are outdated terms. If you're a white person, please do not say "Negro." That is...this is not your place. Do not say "Negro." And instead of "handicapped," I'm sure you all know, we use the term "disabled." I am going to use these outdated terms in the quotes because I want the quote to maintain its integrity, but just know that this is not something that I would be saying out on the street with people. This is simply because I'm reading a quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:58

Okay, Myth number one: you think you know how Dr. King felt about riots. I'm sure you remember, during the summer of 2020, that at some of the Black Lives Matter protests there was some property damage. And some people will point to Dr. King to discredit the goals of Black Lives Matter because of this property damage at the protests. And I think it's so important that we note first off, right off the bat, that approximately 93% of Black Lives Matter protests have been peaceful. There was a study, they looked at all the protests and they found that, overwhelmingly, Black Lives Matter protests have been a peaceful situation. But still, there are people who are looking for an excuse to discredit Black Lives Matter. But they don't

want to admit that the motives for them discrediting Black Lives Matter are racist, so instead of interrogating their racism, they will hide behind what they think know about Dr. King's approach to non-violent resistance.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 10:04

Let me give you an example. I'm sure you have one from your own life, because what I've heard from you is that people are saying this stuff all the time. But I have an example that we saw play out online. So Dr. King's son, Martin Luther King III he tweeted, quote, "As my father explained during his lifetime, a riot is the language of the unheard." End quote. And I'm sure you've heard that quote floating around because Dr. King did in fact, say that. And there was some random person, I couldn't figure out who he was, he's just a commenter on the internet, his name is Jason Patrick. And he responded to Martin Luther King III's tweet and said, quote, "That quote is taken completely out of context. The great MLK would never condone any kind of activity like that." End quote. Okay, so let's use Dr. King's own words to debunk this myth that this random person on the internet, Jason Patrick, knows how Dr. King felt about riots. He did say "a riot is the language of the unheard," but he also got much more specific than that, and he talked about the importance of focusing on the root cause of the rioting. So I'm going to share with you a few pieces of a lecture that he gave called "Non-Violence and Social Change." And he gave this in a lecture series that was hosted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I like I said, I read this in "The Radical King," but I was actually able to find the entire speech online, so I will link it in the show notes. Please read this speech. Like, seriously, please read this speech. It was so good. I wanted to read you three full pages of the speech, but my sweet lawyer husband informed me that that's illegal, so I'm not going to be reading you that much of it. But oh, it's so good. Go read it for yourself. The link will be in the show notes. So in this speech, he's speaking specifically about riots. And he's saying that there are a lot of people who say that the riots are proof that Black people hate white people, and want to quote unquote, "destroy them." He says, quote, "This bloodless interpretation ignores one of the most striking features of the city riots. Violent they certainly were. But the violence, to a startling degree, was focused against property rather than against people. There were very few cases of injury to persons. And the vast majority of rioters were not involved at all in attacking people." He goes on to say, quote, "A life is sacred. Property is intended to serve life. And no matter how much we surround it with rights and respect, it has no personal being. It is part of the Earth man walks on. It is not man." End quote. So he's intentionally making this distinction between hurting property and hurting people, because he's trying to help people see that if Black people really wanted to hurt white people and quote, unquote, "destroy them," then they would take advantage of there being a riot to do that very thing. In the speech he says that if they wanted to hurt white people, this would be the perfect time, but they're not hurting white people. So if destroying white people is not their goal, then what is their goal? He says, quote, "The focus on property in the 1967 riots is not accidental. It has a message. It's saying something." End quote. So he's saying we need to take a minute and figure out what are they communicating by hurting property instead of hurting people. And he really breaks down that it wasn't that much more safe to hurt property. You would think that they were hurting property so that they wouldn't get in as much trouble, but he makes the point that people are taking on a big risk when they're damaging property. Because these people who are participating, they're putting themselves in as much danger as they would if they were going to hurt people. He says, quote, "The military forces were treating acts of petty larceny as equal to murder." End quote. So it's not like hurting property versus hurting people is going to get them any less punishment. So if it's the same type of punishment, and they really wanted to "destroy" white people, then why are they hurting property and not people? And he said it's, quote, "because

property represents the white power structure, which they were attacking and trying to destroy." End quote. So he's very specifically saying they're not trying to destroy white people, they're trying to destroy white power and the structure that is oppressing them. It's more about what the property symbolizes than the property itself. He says it's about quote, "Redressing the power imbalance that property represents." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:57

So I thought that this tension between people and property was really interesting. But then this next part, I was like, "Whoa, mind blown." So he goes on to talk about how after the riots, there were hundreds of Black people who were actually trying to return the stuff that they took. They didn't even keep the stuff. And that's because it really wasn't about this stuff at all. It was about power, and how this power has been withheld from Black people since before the founding of our country. So what he's saying here is we need to look at the root cause of this behavior. Why are the riots happening? His conclusion is that the people who do have the power need to take action. The white people in this situation have the power, and they need to take action to address the root causes of these riots if they really want to see change. He says, quote, "The administration has ignored its responsibility for the causes of the riots, and instead has used the negative aspects of them to justify continued inaction on underlying issues. The administration's only concrete response was to initiate a study and call for a day of prayer. As a minister, I take prayer too seriously to use it as an excuse for avoiding work and responsibility." End quote. Oh, my goodness. How many times have you heard someone say, "thoughts and prayers, thoughts and prayers," right? in response to something tragic that has happened instead of taking responsibility and figuring out what they can do to help solve the problem? Oh, my goodness, I am taking that quote and putting it in my back pocket for the next time someone tells me "thoughts and prayers," and I'm gonna be like, "You know what? Dr. King said you cannot use that to get out of taking action to help stop what's happening in this community." So that's why I said that myth number one is that you know how Dr. King felt about riots, because I have heard so many people say, in response to the property damage that happens during these protests, that Dr. King would be so disappointed. Well, have you ever read His words? Because if you don't read his speeches, you don't actually know what he thinks about rioting.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:17

The other thing that's really important for us to acknowledge is that the terms "riot" and "loot" are oftentimes rooted in racism, because people are really quick to label something as a riot when the participants are Black and other people of color, but they really don't do the same when it comes to white people. White people can destroy lots of things without it being called a riot. I mean, take a second to think about looting in relation to so many different art and cultural museums in the United States, but also across Europe and Canada. I mean, you go into these museums, and you see these artifacts, and you think, "Wow, how beautiful! This is so amazing!" But those are stolen. So many of those artifacts have been stolen from Black and brown communities, and I don't know about you, but I don't usually hear people saying stuff like, "Wow, they did a lot of looting to fill this museum." But that's what they were doing: looting. So we just need to be really careful about how we use both of these terms. And I actually have it on my list of episodes to create in the future. I think it would be really great to

break down these terms of "rioting" and "looting" and when we see them used, but I don't have time today. But just be really careful when you're thinking about "rioting" and "looting" versus property damage and how all of those things are working together.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:39

The last thing I want to point out before we move on to myth number two is that Dr. King said that a RIOT is the language of the unheard, not an insurrection. He did not say an insurrection is the language of the unheard. He said a riot. There are lots of people who will try to compare the property damage from the Black Lives Matter protests to the January 6 Insurrection. And those two things are just not even comparable. Dr. King said that people destroy property as a symbol of the inequitable power structure. Now, the insurrectionists were very clear that their goal was not property damage. As the investigation is ongoing and as things have come out, we've learned that their intent was truly to violently execute leaders of our country so that they could bypass the democratic process and keep 45 in power. So that's why I said that the January 6 Insurrection and the Black Lives Matter protests are not even comparable, because property destruction as a symbol of trying to balance an unfair system, and creating a plan to overthrow the US government and execute leaders—those are two completely different things. They are not comparable. The insurrectionists killed a police officer. Other police officers died by suicide after the insurrection. So they did not just hurt property, they hurt people. And that was their intention. So to compare these two things is just totally wrong, totally uncalled for. So no, you don't know how Dr. King feels about rioting, unless you've actually read his words. And when you do read his words, you realize that you really have a responsibility here. You can't just sit there and say, "You guys are doing something wrong" and wag your finger and call on Dr. King to support your finger wagging. You have to do something to try to change the power situation so that people do not feel like they need to riot and loot and destroy property in order to get their point across.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:48

All right, myth number two: Dr. King would have been anti-Critical Race Theory; he would have been anti-CRT. Now you're probably as sick of hearing about CRT as I am, but I'm sure you already know that legislations across the country have banned Critical Race Theory in schools, and lots of different politicians are citing Dr. King as part of their motivation to ban Critical Race Theory and other ethnic studies programs and other things that are actually really beneficial for our children. So it was tough to narrow down the examples to just one because there are so many, but this one seemed pretty egregious. So Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, he introduced the "Stop WOKE Act." And as he was introducing the "Stop WOKE Act," he specifically talked about Dr. King. He said anti-racism is quote unquote, "state-sanctioned racism." And then he explained that the "Stop WOKE Act" stands for "Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act." It's just, what? Like, that's not even catchy or good. I think, obviously, they're just trying to find some words so that the acronym would create "WOKE," but I feel like they could have tried a little harder. Okay, so he's introducing this "Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act," and he said, quote, "You think about what MLK stood for. He said he didn't want people judged on the color of their skin, but on the content of their character. You listen to some of these people nowadays, they don't talk about that." And then the crowd went wild. They were applauding they were so excited. And in the article that I was reading about the "Stop WOKE Act," it said, quote, "The bill, according to DeSantis, would create a private right of action for

individuals, including students, parents, and employees, to sue schools and employers who forced them to learn Critical Race Theory." End quote. So if someone thinks that they're learning Critical Race Theory, or that their kids are learning Critical Race Theory, they can sue the school.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:05

Oh my. Oh, my lands. Let's just leave it at that: oh my lands. First of all, the hard part about this is that very few people know what Critical Race Theory actually is, so I'm imagining all of these lawsuits that don't amount to anything and are a huge waste of time and money because people don't even understand what Critical Race Theory is. So Bernice King, Dr. King's daughter, responded to Ron DeSantis on Twitter, and she said, quote, "This is an absolute misappropriation and misuse of my father's words. Daddy wasn't working for a society that shuns truth about history and racism. He wrote and spoke about his own deep disappointment in America. It was his dream that we would eliminate racism. It was his dream that we would create racial equity in every area of society, including lending, wages, voting, housing, and education. That has yet to happen. Why not engage my father's words to truly make his dream of eradicating racism, militarism, and poverty a reality?" End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:11

I mean, she said it best, but let's break this down a little further. So I'm not going to go into the details about Critical Race Theory, because we already have an entire episode about that. It's Season Three, Episode 29. It's called "Critical Race Theory in Schools, and I will link that in the show notes. But I do want to share the definition with you just so that we're all on the same page for this conversation. So this is a definition that I got from Sylvia Duckworth, and she worked with Dr. Angel Jones and Dr. Kate Slater to put together resources that explain what Critical Race Theory is. So this definition that they came up with together is quote, "CRT is an academic framework or practice that examines how systems, policies, and the law perpetuate systemic racism. It's called 'Critical Race Theory' because it asks you to look critically at systems to better understand the origins of racial inequities. This knowledge can then be used to migrate and stem the inequities at the root causes, i.e. the system, policy, or law." End quote. So basically critical race theory looks at laws and says, "How are these laws affecting people differently based on race?" The real goal of Critical Race Theory is to uncover the ways that the system is set up to discriminate against and disenfranchise Black and Indigenous People of Color, Black people especially, and then fix it. So we're looking at the laws and we're thinking, "Okay, how are these affecting people differently based on the color of their skin? How are they negatively affecting different communities? And how can we change the laws to make things more fair and more equitable?"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:48

So like Bernice King said, people are completely missappropriating Dr. King's words. They're saying that because he said he wanted people judged on the content of their character and not the color of their skin then we should stop analyzing things through the lens of race. So we're

saying, "Hey, everybody, these racist things are happening. This law has a racist outcome." And people are saying, "Lalala! Plug my ears! Content of your character, not the color of your skin!" It is very frustrating.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:18

So let's see what Dr. King thought about whether or not there was a system in our country that affected people differently based on race. Okay, so the quotes I'm going to share with you are from a, I'm not sure if it was a speech or an essay, but it's called "After Desegregation, What?" And Martin Luther King wrote this in 1961. So it was before a lot of the civil rights acts were passed. And in this he's speaking about the young Black and white people who are involved in the movement. And he says, quote, "[He] is not engaged in a lark, nor superficially thrilled by the excitement and kicks of the movement. [He] is part of a worldwide thrust into the future to abolish colonialism and racism, to replace institutionalized handicaps with free opportunity." End quote. Now, I mentioned before, I use the word "handicap," because that's what he used. But what he's saying is that people are being oppressed, and that it's institutionalized oppression that is holding them back. And that's the part that really stuck out to me, because it sounds to me like he was looking at how the laws affected different people based on race. So Critical Race Theory, anybody? He was saying that it's not enough to get rid of the laws that are blatantly racist, we have to replace them with laws that create that free opportunity that he was talking about.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 27:51

He talked about this system of oppression in many different speeches. But there was another speech that I read where I felt like his words spoke very clearly to Critical Race Theory. In a speech called "Where Do We Go From Here," this was given by Dr. King at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967. It was his last speech that he gave as the president of the SCLC. He said, quote, "We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of values." End quote. So we need to look at the laws that we're creating and figure out how they align with the values that we have as a country. Are they truly treating all people equally like it says in the Declaration of Independence that we believe? Or are they treating people differently and oppressing certain groups of people? Now, the thing that stuck out to me when I was reading this is, I went and I looked back at the date, because that first speech that I was telling you about, "After Desegregation, What," that was written in 1961. But this speech is from 1967. And in 1967, these civil rights acts have already been passed. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, and the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. So he's not talking about these overtly racist Jim Crow laws, he's talking about the laws that continue to cause negative outcomes for Black people, even if they don't have the phrase or word "Black" in them.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 29:28

The other thing that I was reflecting on, as I was reading these speeches, is kind of this eerie feeling that I was getting. I was getting this eerie feeling, because it really felt like I could see how history is repeating itself. It's like the people who are blocking the road and the path to racial progress and racial justice are literally using the same tactics that they've been using

since the Jim Crow era and probably even before that. So in that essay "After Desegregation, What" he was talking specifically about the desegregation of schools, and he said, quote, "Federal judges are becoming less patient with recalcitrant school boards and politicians." Now, if you don't know what the word "recalcitrant" means, it's okay, because I had to look it up, too. It means "uncooperative attitude towards authority." So he's saying that we have school boards and we have politicians organizing to continue to oppress Black people and to continue to further racism. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh, they're doing the same thing that they've been doing since 1960." Oh, it's kind of a little tiny bit depressing, because I know that I've seen so many issues at school board meetings, and I have seen so many politicians who are on this anti-CRT train. And it's not just Critical Race Theory. They're banning ethnic studies programs. They're trying to ban certain books. And in some places, they're literally trying to ban teachers from teaching about Martin Luther King altogether. Like, what? What!? In that speech "Where Do We Go From Here," he said, quote, "The tendency to ignore the Negro's contribution to American life and strip him of his personhood is as old as the earliest history books, and as contemporary as the morning's newspaper." End quote. So he's telling us like it is. We have people who are using the same tactics that they've always used to try to discredit, erase, and oppress the Black community.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:40

So based on all of these things that we've read in these speeches, I feel like it would be hard to say that Dr. King would be against Critical Race Theory. He truly was talking about the concept of Critical Race Theory before Critical Race Theory even existed. He just didn't have the word for it. He didn't call it CRT because that terminology comes out of the Black Power movement, and the Black Power movement was during the 1970s, after the civil rights movement. So I think if he had the term CRT he would have been using it, but it wasn't even around yet.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:14

All right, so we have successfully debunked two of the myths, the first being that you know how Dr. King felt about riots, and the second being that Dr. King would have been anti-Critical Race Theory. Now, the third myth is that Dr. King's dream has already been achieved. I know this one is hard to hear, but the reality is that his dream of people being judged on the content of their character, instead of the color of their skin, and his dream of eliminating militarism, colonialism, racism, poverty: those things have not been achieved yet.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:53

I feel like when we sit down and spell it all out like that, it's very obvious that his dream hasn't been achieved. But there are a lot of people who want to act like we live in a post-racial society. And there are a lot of people who want to act like the people who are experiencing the daily effects of racism, colonialism, poverty, and militarism have brought it on themselves, that if you're poor, it's because of something that you've done, and not because there is a system that has been created to give other people opportunities over you. We talked about this last week, but it's really important that I say it again: if you think that so many Black people are living in poverty because Black people aren't hard workers or Black people have bad culture, and that's what makes them poor, then that's racist, and you need to interrogate that belief.

Looking again to the speech, "Where Do We Go From Here," that was the one that he gave at the SCLC conference in 1967, Dr. King said, quote, "Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately one half those of whites. Of the bad things in life, he has twice those of whites. Thus, half of all Negroes live in substandard housing, and Negroes have half of the income of whites. When we turn to the negative experiences of life, the Negro has double the share. There are twice as many unemployed, the rate of infant mortality among Negroes is double that of whites. In elementary schools Negroes lag one to three years behind whites." End quote. Dr. King listed off all of these things because these are the things that he wanted to see changed. That was part of his dream, was to see these things changed and to see these things come to an end.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 34:44

So let's take a minute to check on the status of some of the things that he mentioned. Now, this is data that you can find in a lot of different places, but I was really grateful to a woman that I found on Instagram. Her name is Francheska and she compiled it into an infographic. So I'm gonna link her Instagram handle in the show notes, because I want you to go over there and see it for yourself. It is so fantastic. But she took all of these different systemic issues and she broke it down into one very clear, concise infographic. She said the unemployment rate for the Black community is two times higher than that of the white community. Black students make up half of the suspensions, and are three times more likely to be suspended than white students for the same behavior. We have to pause there and recognize that when Black children are not in school, they're falling behind. So they're being suspended at a higher rate for longer for the same behaviors as white students, which is not only discriminatory, but it's making them fall behind in their classes and hurting their education. Black drivers are 30% more likely to be pulled over by police than white drivers. White families hold 90% of the wealth in our country, and Black families hold 2.6% of the nation's wealth. And that wealth gap continues to grow. Black mothers are three-to-four times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth, because of the racist biases that are held by doctors, and Black newborns are 2.3 times more likely to die from negligent medical care. So yeah, we've got a long way to go. And all of the things that Dr. King mentioned in his speech that we are struggling with as a country, and that the Black community is taking the brunt of, are still happening today.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 36:46

One of the things that I learned as I was digging into his work and his words is the importance of, of course changing the laws to make things more equitable, but also the work that we have to do internally—in ourselves, in our families, and in our communities. In his speech, "After Desegregation, What," he was talking about the fact that desegregation and integration are two different things. So just because we get rid of segregation doesn't mean that people are naturally going to integrate. One of the things that he says that we need to focus on is, quote, "Once the laws between them have been struck down, both Negroes and whites will still need to win friends across the invisible, though nonetheless real, psychological color line. Such a challenge will be more difficult and less glorious." End quote. So yes, we need to change the laws. But we also really need to look inward and change the attitudes. This work is a marathon, it's not a sprint, and it's far from over. I don't mean to make you feel hopeless by telling you that Dr. King's dream has not been achieved, I just hope you can see that there's so much work to be done and that you have a responsibility in this work.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 38:03

We did it y'all! Three myths about Dr. King that people use to justify their racism, we have just debunked them together. The first being that you know what Dr. King thought about writing, the second being that he would be anti-CRT, and the third being that his dream has already been achieved. I think one of the things that I've noticed is that the people who are using Dr. King's quotes out of context really haven't read very much of Dr. King's work. In 2018, his daughter Bernice King said, quote, "Someone tweeted to me that my father didn't offend people. At the time that he was killed, a poll reflected that he was the most hated man in America. Most hated. Many who quote him now and use him to deter justice would likely hate him, too, if they truly studied MLK." End quote. The thing that I take from that is that if you feel like you can post a quote by Dr. King, but you don't need to change anything in your life, then you're doing it wrong. You really are, you're doing it wrong. If you read Dr. King, and you feel like nothing needs to change, there's an issue. If you're white, and you hold white privilege, or you have proximity to power, and you quote Dr. King, I really hope that you have concrete action steps that you're taking to be anti-racist in your life. I think one challenge that I would love to extend to you over this Martin Luther King holiday in order to honor Dr. King is to read the entire speech. If you're going to post a quote, make sure that you read the whole thing before you choose the quote that you're going to post so that you're not taking something out of context.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 39:47

Like I was saying a little while ago, hope is such a huge piece of this journey. And I want to tell you that if you're feeling a little bit heavy right now, that is okay. That's part of the journey too. But we have a really hopeful episode coming next week. I'm so excited to share it with you. I was able to interview a New York Times journalist. Her name is Veronica Chambers, and she wrote a book called "Call and Response: The Story of Black Lives Matter." And it's really about the movement, about activism, and the best thing that I got from the interview with her was a renewed sense of hope. So I'm so excited. I hope you'll tune in next week. She's so wise, and she really talks about the importance of lifting where you stand. So go out, read Dr. King, gather some hope from his words, and then come back next week and listen to Veronica Chambers. She is brilliant.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 40:41

Before we go, I have to remind you about Bite-Sized Black History. I want you to get on that waiting list, because I'm so excited to share it with you. Go to firstnamebasis.org/bsbh, and I will put that link in the show notes. And as soon as Bite-Sized Black History is ready, I will send you a coupon code so that you can know when you can go and invest in it for your family on February 1. And as I said, we'll be sending out sneak peeks. It's, Oh, it's gonna be so good. I'm so excited. I hope you have a great week, and I hope you find some opportunity to take care of yourself, because that is so important in this work, too. I love you all so much.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 41:24

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you, and how

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](#). 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.