

5.5 Raising Multiracial Children with Dr. Jenn Noble

📅 Mon, 1/24 9:19AM ⌚ 1:00:39

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

parents, kid, mixed, question, people, black, race, feel, white, families, connected, identity, jenn, mom, multiracial, home, hear, learning, biracial, world

SPEAKERS

Dr. Jenn Noble, Jasmine Bradshaw

- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Five, Episode Five: "Raising Multiracial Children, with Dr. Jen Noble."

- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:15
Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the confidence you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together, we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want: a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:50
Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. Oh my goodness, this episode. I really think that this season is like a season of healing for me, because I pretty sure I'm gonna say that about every episode we make. Because this episode was like a balm to my soul. I had the opportunity to talk to Dr. Jenn Noble, who is a clinical psychologist that specializes in identity development for multiracial kids. Now, being a black-biracial woman myself, I was like, "Oh my gosh. Can I just ask you all of my questions?" But what I did was I went on Instagram, and I asked you all what you wanted to hear from Dr. Jenn, and I got so many amazing questions. I guess I really didn't know how many parents of multiracial children, or multiracial people themselves were in our First Name Basis family. So I'm just really excited, because I know that if you are someone who's multiracial, or you love someone who is multiracial, you're gonna be nodding your head along with the things that Dr. Jenn is saying and feeling like you're having really big mindset shifts and epiphanies throughout this episode, because that's how I felt when I was listening to her answers. But I want to tell you that even if you are someone who is not

multiracial, you will still learn so much from Dr. Jenn. people who are monoracial white, Black, Indigenous, Asian—however you identify, you're going to take so much from what she says and what she teaches, because the census and the other research is showing that this category of people who are multiracial, it's just going to continue to grow and get bigger as we continue in our society. So even if you're monoracial and your kids are monoracial, you probably know multiracial people in your life. And as you know, here at First Name Basis, we believe it's so important that we learn about each other and our different experiences.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:49

So let me tell you a little bit more about Dr. Jenn Noble. She is a licensed psychologist, parent coach, and associate professor of psychology. She has a private practice in LA, where she works with mixed-race teens and their monoracial parents, BIPOC women of Color, including mixed-race women, and other marginalized groups, Dr. Jenn's new program, the Mixed Life Academy, which you will hear about at the end of the episode, is a fantastic place for mixed-race children and mixed-race parents, because it provides coaching for parents of mixed-race kids so they can learn how to affirm their child's existence as a mixed-race person in the world and raise confident, secure, mixed-race kiddos.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:32

Now, I don't know about you, but this is something that I feel like I need in my life. So I was so grateful to hear that Dr. Jenn is in the thick of creating it for us. Dr. Jenn's passion for this work really comes from her own identity and experience as a mixed-race, African-American and Sri Lankan Tamil Blasian woman. Now there was one term that I wanted to break down for you before we start the interview, because I wanted to make sure we are all on the same page. So Dr. Jenn use the term monoracial minority, which means a monoracial person of color. So this would be like someone who is Black and not mixed, someone who identifies as having two Black parents. I just wanted to mention that just in case that term is new to you. The other thing I wanted to say is that you will hear her reference lots of amazing resources, including the Mixed Person's Bill of Rights, and researchers who have been doing this work for decades. It's really amazing once you look into it. So we have linked everything for you in the show notes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:37

Speaking of the show notes, one of my most exciting links in the show notes is the link to sign up for the Bite-Sized Black History waitlist. Now if you're not sure, Bite-Sized Black History is the program that I created for you so that you can have a meaningful Black History Month celebration in your home or in your classroom. And we are actually jumping into Season Two of Bite-Sized Black History. Last year, we had over 600 families and teachers invest in Bite-Sized Black History for themselves and for their kiddos. And it is an amazing podcast just for kiddos. So what I've done is I take 12 Black Americans from American history, and I really tried to find people that either you've never heard of, or you've heard of them, but you're not quite sure who they are. And I do a ton of research to figure out what they were like and what their life was like, and then I take all of that information and put it into a podcast episode just for kiddos. So the great thing about Bite-Sized Black History is that you press play on the podcast episode, and then you can get out your booklet that goes along with it. The booklet has an illustration of

the person that you're learning about and reflection questions. So while they're listening, they can be coloring the illustration, and then after you finish, it's really meant for you to connect and to have really deep, meaningful conversations about what you've just heard. So you can talk about the reflection questions together, and you can really dig into the people that you're learning about. It is so fun. It's so exciting. I just can't wait to share all these people with you. We are learning about pilots and figure skaters, journalists and inventors, zoologists. Like, it's gonna be so cool. So if you are excited about Black history and celebrating Black History Month with your students or with your kiddos, you can just go to firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory, you can sign up for the waitlist there, and you will be the first to know when Bite-Sized Black History Season Two is available on February 1. And we will be sending out a coupon code to our email list. So the only way to get that coupon code is to get on the list. Go to firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory, or just click the link in the shownotes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:50

Oh my goodness. Dr. Jenn, thank you so much for being on the First Name Basis podcast.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 06:55

Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here. This is gonna be fun.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:59

Yes, I've heard from so many parents who are absolute fans of your work. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

D Dr. Jenn Noble 07:07

Yeah, so my name is Jennifer Noble. And a little bit about myself. I am a Cali native, born and raised in Southern California area. I don't know...I grew up loving, you know, dance and music, and I went into psychology. And so that's a quick fast-forward. But so fast forward to my graduate school work, so that is really my passion. The work that I do today is comprised of like a bunch of arms, but they all sort of come back to psychology, well-being, kids, and teens and families. So the work that I do today is I'm a clinical psychologist with a private practice here in Los Angeles area. And in that private practice, I see "I say adolescence, because adolescence goes from about 12-ish to 25" and so that is, the majority of the people that I see are sometimes within that age range. So I would count a 23-year-old as an adolescent, for example. And then I also see young adult women of color. So all my teen clients or adolescent clients are usually teens of color, either they're mixed-race or they're monoracial minority, or they are having multiple, sort of marginalized identities, whether they're, you know, LGBT, you know, queer, somewhere in there. And then, like I said, I work with young women of color, again, also either mixed-race or multiracial. And then any parents that I work with are usually parents of a mixed-race teen or a teen of color, looking for, you know, support, etc.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 08:54

Dr. Jenn Noble 09:18

So that's, my one arm is the private practice. Then I have the other arm, which is teaching at a community college. Again, teaching adolescents because the majority of colleges, the age range is 18 to 25. Although community college, you know, you can get all the way up to someone that's taking your class at 62. So I teach a bunch of psychology classes there, and I really enjoy, you know, being in the classroom with students and, you know, conveying my passion about the topic, and having some really interesting discussions about their lives, etc.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 09:26

And then the third arm is what probably your listeners know me for today, which is like the Instagram world, my social media self, which is trying to reach the parents of mixed-race kids. And that really kind of happened because, you know, there's a bunch of families with mixed kids that, their kids don't need therapy, per se, you know, there's not actual clinical diagnoses going on, but the parents are like, "But we need some support. We need something. We need some help." And so that's where I'm trying to kind of fill in that blank, where there's parents that are like, "Look, we're functioning pretty well, my kid's doing pretty well, but I just know I need some information, because I don't know how to talk about this mixed-race identity. I don't know how to support them. I don't know if I'm dropping the ball somewhere." And so I've always believed, in all of my work, that working with kids, if I can get the parents on board, and if I can get the parents some, some shift in their understanding, and their shift in their approach for the kid, the kid is just, they thrive so much more.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 10:37

Yes. Oh, my gosh, thank you. Yes, I was telling you before we hit record that I feel like it's such a blessing to have your work in my life as someone who is multiracial. I have always just thought like, "No one gets it," you know? It's just one of those worlds that you're not Black enough for the Black people, you're not white enough for the white people, and where do you fit? So having someone who says, "I'm here for you," as a multiracial person is so so great. Right. So my first question for you is specifically about identity development. Okay. Can you talk about how identity development for multiracial children is different from the identity development of monoracial children?

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 11:18

Yeah, I mean, I love this question. It's, it's a very academic question, actually, because people have been studying this exact question since like, the 90s, or the early 90s. Identity development for monoracial kids sort of follows a particular path. And I'm saying monoracial children, monoracial minority children. So there is a whole bunch of research that talks about white racial identity development. And that also has its own sort of path, if you will, or stages. So there's kind of two separate things. So when we're kind of putting, let's say, monoracial Asian and monoracial black, monoracial Hispanic, etc., the pattern that they tend to follow is, the first step is usually not thinking about race at all, or really identifying with white culture, the dominant culture, and then having this like, you know, "wool pulled from over your eyes" kind of moment where they're like, "Wait, hold on." So there's usually a stage where they have some encounter that's, like, probably a racial microaggression, that makes them realize, "Oh, wait, all this time, I thought I was white too, and now you're telling me I'm not. Hmm." And so

then that third phase is usually going hard in the paint for whatever their group is. So they become super extra Asian, all of a sudden, or super, you know, down for the cause Black like. And then there's some other stages after that, where that loosens up a little bit, and they sort of figure out, 'Okay, I don't have to go so hard about being, you know, 'Everything Asian is the best type of thing.' Now, I can just be comfortable in, 'Okay, I know myself as a Black or, you know, whatever person.' And I understand that, and I don't need to kind of convince everybody all the time."

D Dr. Jenn Noble 13:16

That tends to be the the pattern for monoracial minorities' sort of racial identity. When you look at mixed-race, or multiracial kids, it doesn't really follow that same path. One of my favorite researchers, which I know a lot of people talk about because she wrote the multiracial Bill of Rights is Maria Root. Dr. Root, she's written about multiracial identity development, and I particularly love her approach there. So to be fair, there are a lot of models out there and a lot of different ways that people discuss multiracial or mixed-race identity development. But the ways that it's different is that mixed-race kids can follow a whole, like, it's not a straight line—first you start here and you end here. That is, that's the biggest difference. And like I said, Dr. Ruth, she's sort of given five different ways that mixed-race kids can identify at any given time in their life, and all of that will be okay, because there's no one right place to start or finish. And so that's, that's a real big difference. So this is why I think it creates a lot of conflict when we have monoracial people asking about mixed-race identity, because the monoracial person's like, "Wait. I did my questioning, and I know where I stand now. And why are you, you look like you're jumping around. So pick one and stay there." And "Oh, well, how come like last year you said you were Black. Oh, now you're trying to say you're this? Oh, well, now you're just saying your mixed What does that even mean?" And it, like, if you looked at the research, you'd be like, "Oh, that's normal. Okay." Like, that's what they're supposed to do. She kind of described it like a spiral. I just feel like it's a windy path where there's multiple stops on this path, and that is the main difference. And if we can, if we really could accept that difference, I think a lot of the assumptions of confusion, and "Oh, this mixed-person doesn't know who they are," a lot of that would be reduced, because we start to be able to say, "Oh, wait. This is what they're supposed to do. They're on that path. They're on the identity path." Yeah.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 15:39

Oh, my gosh, well, thank you for telling me that I'm normal. When you're talking about the monoracial identity development, I was like, "No, no, no." Like, that's not how it is for me. And I just feel like, some days I am like, "Yeah, like, I'm Black, and I'm proud. Black power." And then other days, I'm like, trying to assimilate and then I'm like, mad at myself. And it's just like, all the things and oh, my gosh. Thank you, that, just even just hearing you reflect that back to me that it's totally normal for you to feel like, I just, it feels to me like I'm on a pendulum of where like, sometimes I'm floating in the middle and I'm kind of balanced. And other times I swing to one side or another side. And it's just, oh, yeah, that is so true. Thank you.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 16:21

Yeah, there's a wonderful one-woman show by Fanshen Cox. She's an amazing mixed-race woman. But I love her journey in general, because if you were to have followed her work over

the years, there were some years where she was like, "I am a Black woman." Like, "hear me roar"-type thing. And then it moved into "I'm a mixed-race woman." And then you know, it's like, you could almost see this over the years, even though she's still doing similar work throughout it, and being the activist person that she is, and, like, fighting white supremacy and all this kind of stuff, there were these shifts in her own identity that were totally normal. And they were just part of her own evolution and self-understanding. And then, you know, just kind of like going back and forth, like you said, this pendulum of, like, "I'm super pro-, you know, woke Black, and that's how I want to identify, and oh, wait, I can still be woke. But I can maybe rename myself in this way. Maybe I want to identify in a way that includes more things. And oh, wait, maybe I'm shifting again." All of that is totally okay. You know, so yeah. Yeah.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:29

Oh, I love that. Okay, so how can we prepare our children for the questions that they're going to get about their identity? Like, I'm thinking of the question like, "What are you?" or I'm thinking of, like, when I was being picked up from daycare, I have a really distinct memory of being really young, and someone saying to me, "Why are you Brown, but your mom is white?" And I didn't really know what to say. I'm like, "She's just my mom. It just is." But I was so young I didn't have the vocabulary for it. So I'm wondering, how do we prepare our kids for that?

D Dr. Jenn Noble 18:01

Yeah, you know, some of my approach and like, a lot of the work I do, is kind of not over-complicating things. And sometimes the simplest answer is, "What is the best answer?" So for your question, this idea of like, how do we prepare our kids, you literally prepare them like concretely like, "Hey, people are going to say this to you. Here's how you can respond," or "Let's read a book about how someone else responded," or "Let's practice. What are some things you could say? Or what can Mommy say when I'm there with you? What can Daddy say?" Well, you know, let's, you know, it's almost like role playing and literal preparation. You know, and it seems like, it's, I think some parents might be like, "Well, gosh, I don't want to sit down with my kid and be like, 'Okay, someone's gonna say, what are you? What do you think you're gonna say?'" Like, it feels, you feels odd, but at the same time, it is the information that they need. So you find a way within your own sort of family culture to sit down and be like...let's say you have that daycare moment, and the kid is like, "Oh, you know, so and so just said this to me." And now the parent can be like, "All right, that's not going to happen again. Let me talk with my kid." "All right, well, what? What do you think?" "I don't know. You're just my mommy." "Well, mommy is white, and daddy is this, and did you know...? You get to say you're both." And you know, like, really just spelling it out. So the kid's like, "Oh!" you know? Like, it's as concrete as, you know, where do oranges come from? Or something, you know? "You overthink it and we say, "Oh my gosh, this question, 'What are you?' I don't know how to...what if I make them sad? What if I..." No! All that is just information that you are giving because they need it. The the injury that's going to come is when they don't have the answer, and then they're like, "What do I say? This feels weird. This feels negative. Something is..." You know, like, that's what you were sensing when you were a kid. It's like, "Okay, they mean something by this question, and I'm not really sure. What am I supposed to take from this?" But it sounds bad. And, you know, you know, like, "I don't know how I'm supposed to answer, but I think I'm supposed to be feeling bad about my answer," you know?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 18:20

Yeah. I mean, when I was at home, my parents were so, like, encouraging for my identity, and they would build us up. And we would read all different types of books with different types of people in it, which was kind of rare back in the 90s, right? to even have those. But they said they were seeking them out. So to then have those questions, it was like, "Wait," and like you said it wasn't necessarily my parents, it was the tone of the question that I was like, "Oh, no, there's something wrong." Right?

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 20:45

Right. So that's what I mean by parents actually saying, you know, we're like, almost like, "Hey, we're cool at home. But you know, people, they're going to be surprised to see you, or they don't really see a lot of families like us. And do you remember that time we went to the restaurant, and they asked if we were all together? What can we say next time? And what, you know, do you see how they're not used to us? And that's okay, you know, but here's what we can say, here's what you can say, here's how you answer." And in a way, it is breaking a little bit of that protection that we like to have for kids, which is like, I don't want them to have to, you know, deal with anything in the real world. But that's why I just don't believe that. I feel like, unfortunately, you do kind of have to break that little bit of protection for the kid because they need to protect themselves. So rather than keeping them sheltered, and saying, "Oh, no, they don't need to know about the world and how the world is going to see them." That's exactly what they need. And giving them information early, it actually makes them stronger and better able to withstand those questions, because they can just look at the person and be like, "All right, I know you're being negative. But actually, here's the matter of fact answer. And you can do whatever you want with it. But that's the truth. And that's the basics of your question. And now I'm going to leave." You know what I mean?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 22:13

I really like how you pointed out how important it is to give them this information early. Because I feel like it leads perfectly into my next question, which is, what is the best way that we can help multiracial children feel like they're whole and connected to each part? When I put it out on Instagram that I was going to be interviewing you, so many people were excited and sent me so many questions. And one of the moms said, "I'm biracial, and my kids are white-presenting. How do I make them feel included even though they don't look Black or Korean?"

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 22:46

Yeah, it's a tough question, because I think what she's saying is, "The world is gonna see my kid a certain way. And what do I do about that?" Because really at home, she can "ignore" how they look, quote, unquote, if that makes sense. Meaning when the kid is at home, that mom can be sort of saying, "Hey, you are this you are this and you are this. Don't let anybody ever tell you that you're not. Doesn't matter what you look like." You know what I mean? It's really, the work of that mom is helping their kid understand that even though their phenotype, like the way they look, may not be what everybody else expects, that does not take away their membership and their inclusion in...did you say Black, Korean, and I'm not sure if the other

parent is white? Or did they just somehow look white-presenting? I don't want to assume. But yeah, but they're not those three things. And so that that's the work of like preparing a kid to realize, "Oh, people are gonna think I'm this." That's the real problem. It's not that the kid is not. The kid is, and the kid can know who their grandparents are, and they can know who their mom and you know, aunties and cousins and whatever. They know who they're connected to. But the kid has to now understand, "Oh, people will not readily see that when they see me. And what do I do about that?" That's what the parent is really preparing that kid for. And so the more that you tell that kid at home...Do not "you know what I'm saying?" Like, do not give credit to those who say you can't be Black because you don't look Black. It's easier said than done. But that's the way I would approach that, because that is the real issue. You, I mean, you can have a monoracial Black person be questioned about whether they're Black or not simply because of the way they look. "Oh, you have light skin. Your eyes are light, and how come your hair is, like a, you know, kind of light brown. You're not really Black." But that kid, they're not really sort of doing anything other than trying to fight the the way they look to everybody else. So the more that they have the confidence and the awareness of at home, saying, "You know what? I know what I am, and you can't take that from me." You know what I'm saying? I work with a family where I really, I've just been, it's so rewarding to see that when the parents got on board, and this is a, one of the parents is dark brown and the other parent is Caucasian. I'm just trying to keep it neutral so that I don't you know, give away too much about the family, but but the child has very light skin, very light eyes, very light hair. And is often questioned "Oh, are you really a part of this, you know, this other group?" And at first, before I began working with them, that was more upsetting. It made this child get a little bit more quiet, not know how to respond, feel as though they should sort of shrink into the background. But the more that the parents sort of, were able to get on board with like, "Oh, yeah. Stupid society." You know what I mean? Like, they don't get it, like we know who our kid is, and there's no way she's not connected to us. Let us help her, you know, realize that at home, and then of course, working with the kid themselves. Now, this kid is like, rocking clothing and like really just putting, like stickers, and just, you know, whatever pride type of thing everywhere, and sort of like, "I wish you would say something to me." You know what I mean? But she's also very aware. I mean, I love it, because she's super, where she's like, "I know what I look like. I get it, you know? That's okay." That's where she's at now. And I think that's, that's the goal of a parent like this, is to help that white-presenting kid be like, "I get it. I look like this." You know, "That's all right. You'll be all right. I'll explain it to you." Or, "Or I won't. You'll accept it or you won't, but I'm gonna be good."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 27:10

Yeah! Oh, my gosh, that's so powerful. And it actually made me think a lot about the responsibility of white parents who have white children and talking to their kids about how families can look differently, at your, I mean, you make so many funny reels, but the one about being asked if you're the nanny. Oh, and I tell you I showed every single person in my entire life that reel? Like this is my existence everywhere I go. "Are you the nanny? Are you the nanny?" No! I birthed this child.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 27:41

Oh, yeah. I can only imagine. Yeah, I mean, my mom didn't get "nanny," but she definitely got. "Oh, is...Oh, are you together? Oh, is that your mom? Oh..." like a whole bunch of "Oh, is like..." No, this is what I always say. I'm like, "No, I'm just a random eight-year-old kid that that follows

random women around." Like, you know, saying "Of course I'm her child."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 28:06

Yeah. Or like when people at the store think that I'm trying to get some random white lady to pay for my stuff. This my mom!

D Dr. Jenn Noble 28:17

That was crazy. But that's crazy that that is a more plausible thing than just putting, like the the normal response of like, "Oh, that's probably mother and daughter" together. No, "The thing that makes more sense to me right now is that she's probably trying to get someone to pay for her stuff." What?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 28:34

I know, right? Oh, it's bananas. Okay, let's talk about terminology. Because there's so much out there. I'm wondering how you feel about terms like "mixed" or when people say stuff like "I'm half Black and half white." I feel like what I even call myself has developed so much as I've grown up. Like, I definitely referred to myself as "mixed" when I was growing up, but now I say "Black-biracial," but then I don't love that, because I feel like it like almost centers whiteness, because I don't say white in there any anywhere, you know? So like, you're assuming that the other thing I'm mixed with is white, and I'm just, like, all in my head about it. So yeah, just talk through the terminology with me for a minute.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 29:12

Yeah, well, there is a lot of discussion around this. And again, I do think it has to, it kind of dovetails with, the identity development stuff we were talking about earlier. I think depending on where the mixed-race person is on their identity journey, it probably ties into the, you know, nomenclature they use for themselves. One thing I will say, the only time that I get concerned about what someone chooses to use to refer to themselves is if it's rooted in some sort of denial or shame around some aspect of who they are. So if they, if they're saying, let's say, "mixed," I don't have a problem with the term "mixed." Well, personally, I do have a concern with the term "mixed," just because it's so nebulous. I know that it's shorter, and it's faster, but I do think when general society hears "mixed," they automatically think, "Black-white." And there's so many other combinations out there that I would, I would love for there to be some more specificity.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 30:23

But aside from that, if someone were to say, "mixed," I really wouldn't have a problem with that, as long as they are connected to and proud of everything that is in their background. I would be more concerned if someone said they are "mixed," because they don't want to say that, let's say, one of their parents is Black, or let's say they have some shame around, let's

say, they're Filipino and white or something, and they don't really like being connected to Filipino culture. And so they just say "mixed" to try to kind of like cover it up. That's what I would be concerned about. So it's more the motive of where comes from, I think. And I do think that there are probably a good amount of mixed-race folks who use the term "mixed" because they really don't, they haven't resolved some of their shame in what their mix actually is, and having to kind of vocalize that, and sort of, they're not sure if they're proud of it or connected to it. And so "mixed" kind of helps erase some of it but still tell, answer your question, if that makes sense. So, mixed-race, I think it's a great term.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 31:36

"Biracial," I feel, I personally think it's a more, either an outdated term, but also a term in research that ends up again, also referring to Black and white mixes specifically. So I sometimes think people get lost if we use "biracial," because people start to assume, "Oh, I know what they mean by biracial," when we really don't. And then the "half," or the "parts" or the "fourth," I used to use that for myself. Years ago, I would say, you know, "I'm half Black, I'm half Sri Lankan." But over the years, just, you know, in reading some research, and just being involved in this community is sort of like, why the "half?" You know, I'm not, you know, I'm fully connected to my family, and no one ever really, no one that's monoracial, says like, well, "I'm half my mom and half my dad," like, that's just not a thing. So. So I just stopped saying that. And so I, I think, you know, I guess I should say, maybe my ideal or I would love to see more people remove the "half's" and the "quarters" and the "eighths." I do see that the impact on some mixed race folks is that when they describe themselves as a quarter, they feel like perhaps they can only, like do things up to a quarter amount, like, "Oh, I'm only a quarter Black, so I guess I can't really wear that hairstyle. Because I'm only this, I'm only half. So I can't..." You know? Whatever they want to connect to, they feel like they don't have a right to it. And so I think if we remove some of those fractions, they may feel more permission to connect to their actual heritage and cultural lines.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 33:19

Hmm, yeah, that's a really, really good point. And I definitely feel that like when I would say I'm half this and half that it was just kind of like I'm not owning my identity, as you know, being a whole person. I'm splitting myself, and it doesn't really make sense. So we already talked a little bit about how multiracial children feel like their identity is changing over time. That was one of my questions, so I'm really glad you answered that above. But I'm wondering, I guess I'm speaking from personal experience, though when your identity feels like it's fluctuating, it's, it's hard. It's painful sometimes. And it's that, like, uncomfortable stretching. And I'm just wondering if you have any tips on how we can support our children when they're going through that. How we can, like, build their resiliency, because it is really tough to feel like it's shifting so much.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 34:11

Yeah, to build resilience one of the first places is more open communication. And sometimes I feel like I repeat that statement, but it, it needs to be stated over and over, because I don't think it always lands for parents and families that open communication really means, like,

ripping that band aid off and being like, "Look, we're going to have a tough conversation right now. Like, we're going to talk about the reality of the fact that, you know, Mommy is Indian, you know, Daddy is, I don't know, from Guatemala, and what does that mean for you? What do you think it means?" "Well, I guess I'm both." "Yeah, what do you think other people are gonna think? And what did you notice Auntie So- and-So said the other day, and what do you think we can say to Grandma about that," you know what I mean? Like really just those uncomfortable discussions and decisions, maybe how to interact with other people, that actually builds resilience, because it takes the the surprise out of moments. It, it gives a kid an understanding of what to expect in the world. And one of the things that we don't realize about children, perhaps, is that they don't know what they don't know. And so sometimes the world is, in their mind, different than what it is in reality. And so when they come across something that doesn't match what they had in their mind, that's what's jarring. And that's what's surprising. Like, "Wait, I thought the world was like this. You know, I thought everybody felt like that." You know, that's why you have little kids that will say, maybe they heard Grandpa lie to Grandma or something, and they go, "Oh, Mommy, Grandpa lied." "Yes, Sweetie." You know that, "You're not supposed to lie! And I thought nobody lied." You know, like, that kind of thing. And the parents are like, "Oh, yeah, okay, we need to... 'Well, sometimes people...'" You know? You got to give them nuance and stuff. And then they're like, "Whoa, I see the world a whole different way now." And that's the same thing we got to do with kids around their mixed-race identity and really help them realize the world is seeing you in a different way. "Let me help you prepare for that. And then when you see it for yourself, you won't be surprised."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 36:40

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Okay, I love that. Because I'm thinking of a time recently, I was taking my daughter to dance practice. And we were just waiting for her teacher to come. And there was a little girl, she was white, her mom was white. And she, she looked at me, she looked at my daughter, she looked at me and she looked at my daughter, she turned to her mom and said, "Mommy, I'm so happy. We're the same color." And I was like, "Oh, my goodness, wow." And my daughter was playing with a puppy, so thank goodness, she had no idea. But I was sitting there thinking, "Someday she's gonna have an idea." And I don't even...for the most part, I know what to say as, like, an anti-racist educator, about families like different ways, but I was just like, the idea of it being so personal, and like her feeling sad because of that was just like so much on my parent heart. And I just felt like I need to be more resilient in these moments so that I can model that for her. So thank you.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 37:35

Now that's the real secret there of like, which is some of the work that I try to do, is helping because it's easy to say, "Oh, you need to have these conversations, you need to do this." But it really brings up a bunch of stuff, personal stuff, for parents that they have to overcome in order to have that discussion. And so if the parent hasn't really done that work, or figured out for themselves how to be resilient in moments like that, or how do they navigate stuff. Or for example, for you, it might have been like, taking you back to a whole bunch of stuff you went through as a kid. And so now yours...you know what I'm saying? Like all that has to be dealt with so that you can be like, "All right, shake it off. All right, let me meet my kid where they're at, because they need something from me that they don't know that they need," you know? But But it's much easier said than done.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 38:24

Thank you. I'm working on it. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. I'm wondering, I want you to talk specifically to white parents for a minute. Do you have a couple of tips specifically for white parents? I had a couple of moms write in. One mom said, "How do I explain the difficulty of being multiracial to my white partner?" And another mom said, "As a white mom, how do I incorporate both my kids' culture at home without it feeling like appropriation?"

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 38:53

Oh, yeah. I've had a couple conversations about that last question. So for the white...it sounds like a non-white parent wanting to talk to the white parent. Okay? So I think, first of all, it's not one discussion. It's a lot of mini-discussions. And it's a lot of mini-moments, where you take little opportunities to give a new nugget to that white parent. Because for someone who is, you know, has lived their life, at least in American society, whiteness is the norm and they really haven't had to question a lot of anything around race, but especially their own race. And so too much too fast is very difficult to digest. And so that's why I say "little nuggets." It's here and there to sort of plant a seed of curiosity and let that parent come back with a question. So for example, let's say you're watching a TV show, and I don't know, some scene happens. And I'm not sure if the parent is mixed-race themselves, or they were talking about their kids, but let's say the parent is mixed-race. They can say, "Oh, you know what, I went through something almost exactly like that. When I was a kid, this is what happened, blah, blah, blah." You know, "And it was really tough for me, because of one, two, and three," it's like sharing some of that and letting the other parent just take it in and be like, "Wow, really? And did that happen more than once?" "Yeah, it used to happen all the time." Let's just say for example, there were two Black kids in the school, or you know, one of them mixed-race, and one of them is Black monoracial, but they were both girls. And so everybody kept calling each other the other name, you know what I mean? Like, just never learned.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 40:54

Definitely happened to me. Yeah, exactly.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 40:56

Me too. First of all, the place I work, I've been there for 15 years, my officemate is Black, and I cannot tell you

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 40:57

Yes. I cannot tell you how many people on campus call me her name or call her my name. Students, our coworkers... I'm like, "I have been working with you for 10 years, and you still don't know like who I am? That's crazy to me." But sidebar. Little moments like that, where the parent can think about it and maybe even formulate some questions. Maybe they even come back with a "Well, are you sure that maybe it was just an honest mistake?" Then the

parent could be like, "Well, it happened 37,000 more times, so..." And then the parent could be like, "Oh, really? Oh." You know, and just let them take it in. And so you, you have to go step by step. So to me, I think the secret ways of introducing that would be through, "Let's watch a film together. Let's watch like a TV series. Let's either read this book, or listen to this podcast, and open the discussion, and as far as it goes, that's where it goes until you have the next conversation."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 41:05
Oh no...

J Jasmine Bradshaw 42:06
That is such a good point. And I love that you said that, because that's exactly what my husband and I did. When we were first together, there was something racist that happened and he got so upset, and I remember sitting him down and saying, "This is the tip of the iceberg, my friend. Like, this is just the beginning. And if this is going to rock you so much, maybe this isn't the right relationship. Like, are you ready for what's gonna come and why?" He says now like, "No, I was not ready." He thought he was ready. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. But other times, when we've been more intentional about the learning, I have, like chosen an article for us and we sat down to read it together. And I tell him, "Stop me if you have any questions, like anything that comes up, any objection, like if you're feeling any of that tension in your heart, you know, when your your stomach gets tight and your heart kind of starts to race because it's about race and you're confused. And like, just stop and say it. I won't judge you. I won't be angry. You just have to tell me because we have to get that stuff out so that we can work through it." Yeah. And whenever people ask me, like, "How did you get your husband to be on this anti-racist journey with you?" I'm like, "It's sitting there and listening to him express the biases that he has, so that he can even see what they are when we can work through them together."

D Dr. Jenn Noble 43:18
Right. And that's, it's a lot, that's a lot of tolerance for pain on both sides. You might have to hear your white partner say some stuff where you're like, "Oh, is that really what you think? Oh, no." You know. But you know, to me, I think part of the beauty, dare I say, you know, part of the beauty of a mixed-race child being present, is where the white parent might have denied it to their partner, it is much more difficult to deny it when it happens to their child. Yeah. And like I said, I don't, I don't want to call that beauty. But I'm just saying those, sometimes that is the moment where the parent might be like, "Okay, okay, you know, like, this three-year-old is totally innocent. And I can't believe this happened to them." And "Whoa, now I see the whole world in a different way." And then that partner can be like, "I was trying to tell you that. Now let's talk about it. Now that, now that there's a door open, let's talk about it."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:17
Yeah. Oh, you're so right. Okay. Well, you speak to the other question a little bit. I'll just repeat it just so you have it fresh in your mind. She said "As a white mom, how do I incorporate both

it just so you have it fresh in your mind. She said, "As a white mom, how do I incorporate both my kids' cultures at home without it feeling like appropriation?"

D Dr. Jenn Noble 44:33

Yeah, I think, like I said, I've come across this question quite a bit. And I think it's a really powerful question because it means that the parent really wants to try and they see that cultural exposure is really important. But there is a broader access to problem solving that they have that I think either they're afraid to address because it's personal to them. But what I'm getting at is reaching out to the community themselves, whatever that community is. And that is a whole different ballgame. When you ask a parent who is not, you know, the parent is not Korean, but they want to bring in Korean culture for their kid to actually connect the kid directly to the Korean culture, that means that that parent is going to have to be the odd man out. They're going to have to put themselves in uncomfortable situations and uncomfortable conversations to get their kid access to the culture that they want them to connect to. It is just not going to land the same if the non-Korean parent is trying their best, you know, is just sort of like, "All right, we're going to go to a Korean restaurant today. And that's about as far as I was able to get," you know what I mean? "Or I'm going to," you know, you, please have Korean art around the home and you know, all that stuff is great, but there is so much more richness that is going to come if you can connect your child to the Korean after-school program, where you talk with the administrator and say, "Hey, my child has a Korean parent. I want them to be able to learn one, two, and three. How do I enroll them in this after-school program?" And let them, let them look at you like, "What are you doing here? And what do you mean?" and feel that discomfort, feel that moment of like, "This feels weird, oh, they're not understanding me, I'm not expressing myself well, and oh, this is kind of awkward." So what your goal is, your kid is now going to connect to actual people who are going to bring richness that you can never provide, you know what I mean? They're going to have ways of, you know, interacting behaviorally, there's going to be like vocal intonations, there are just going to be ways of interaction, foods that are brought in, cultural practices, apart from whatever learning is happening in the quote, unquote, "after-school program." But there's going to be personal connections over the years that that kid can make to their teachers, to their peers, where they really start to understand what Korean culture entails, you know, apart from just the surface, things that we can all access, like I said, which is like a food and pieces of artwork and some good films out there. You know what I mean?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 47:27

Yeah. Oh, wow. That's such a good point. Because yes, and I'm sure you already know this, you're a literal doctor of it, but I remember reading some research about the difference between exposing your kids to books and movies and going to cultural festivals versus them having a mentor, or a teacher in their life, who shares their cultural identity, and how much that can change how they feel about themselves. And even for white children who have people of color as mentors and teachers and understanding how that really helps to break down their biases.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 47:59

Right, right. Because then yeah. Exactly. Because that kid starts to learn, like, "Oh, what is it like to be like you in the world?" But as I think you know, like I said, it's a difficult thing for

like to be like you in the world?" But so, I think, you know, like I said, it's a difficult thing for parents to really think about sometimes, but I always give an example of. This was a transracial adoptive family that I am friends with. But I just thought it was such a, I always think is such a beautiful example. Because what they did, they're two Caucasian parents, they adopted a boy from out of the country, from Haiti. So they knew the United States is going to see this kid as a Black boy. And we want him to be prepared for that. So they went to levels which I just don't see a lot of families doing, but they moved to a neighborhood that was predominantly Black. They began attending, they were going to go to church anyway, but they found a church that was, you know, somewhat diverse, but a predominantly Black church, you know, so a lot of them. So that means they were making friends in the church, and then attending social activities for the kids and you know, all this stuff that happens in a church. But they were just the quote, unquote, "odd man out" there, like, "That's okay. We're cool, because in the rest of the world, we're not the odd man out and we'll, we'll be fine, but on the weekends, the one time that our kid gets to see a whole bunch of people that look like him, that's our main goal for him." And he is you can just see the difference that it makes in this kid, and he's had mentors from when he was literally two-years-old, had like, aunts and you know, uncles and grandpa-kind-of figures all around him like, "Hey, how are you doing?" And, and the parents were totally loved because they're, they became part of the community. It's just they had to get over that sort of weird moment of like, "Oh, we stand out. But that's okay. Because pretty soon we will find a community," you know what I mean? Yeah, so it is it was such a, it was a gorgeous experience. And then as he grew, they can move, you know, they just well, it was more of like job related stuff, but they were able to move away and still connect themselves in the way they needed to connect themselves and not have to worry that he would be confused or "What does this mean?" And "Am I Black am I white? I don't know, I'm not connected." He was, they were like, "You're definitely deeply connected." You know what I mean?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 50:24

Yeah, I love that you shared that. Because I think one of the hardest things a lot of people ask me like, "Okay, I live in a predominantly white area, what can I do to bring more diversity in my life?" And I almost hate to tell them that you have to, like, living in a predominantly white area is hurting you? Yeah, like it really is. And as a family, we've been thinking about that and talking about that, like, how do we live out our values in a way that helps our kids know that these are really our values, and not just sometimes not, you know, not just on heritage months and stuff like that, right?

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 50:58

It is. It's a really tough decision, especially where you live depending on where you live. But I can just, you know, for your listeners, I can certainly say I've worked with a good amount of adult mixed-race folks who name living in a city where they were almost, if not literally, the only person of color from like, second grade through high school, that that had such a deep impact on their internalized racism, their self-hatred, their ability to really just see themselves as like, beautiful, you know, attractive to other people. You know, a person that people want to be friends with, all of those, like, basic things that you know, that a middle schooler and a high schooler is trying to navigate. When they don't understand that race can play a role in that, they they can internalize a lot of that and be like, "Well, I'm just not attractive. I must not be, you know, popular. I must not be likable." When it's really no, there was something about the environment where you couldn't see someone else who looked like you. You couldn't find

belonging, you couldn't find, you know, group membership on a deep level, that kind of thing. So, sometimes a lot of those adult clients have said they wished that their parents even moved just two towns over where it was just either more diverse, had more of whatever their background was, because then they could have at least had that connection in their daily life.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 52:39

Yeah. Amen. Yeah.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 52:43

Yeah, it's tough to say. There's a beautiful video out there, though, of a mother in the UK—well, I'm pretty sure it's somewhere in Europe, but I feel like she has a British accent. But she's kind of taking a video of her son, and she presents him with a new school shirt. And then you start to realize that, because he gets very emotional, and he's like, "Oh, my gosh, am I going to this school now? Really? Are you sure? Really?" She's like, "Yep, yep." And you realize, when you look at the previous videos, that he was getting bullied for his racial identity at a school. He was getting ostracized. It was like super stressful for him to go to the school every single day. So the mom made the hard decision of like, "You know what, I'm going to find an appropriate school where it's more diverse. And let me take you out of your misery"-type of thing, "because you can't fix this on your own. So I, as a parent can see that, and I'm gonna put you into school where you need to be," and he was just, I mean, blown away. Like, "Thank you so much, Mom." And she was like, "You know, I got you. Like, I'm not gonna let you keep getting bullied like that," you know, so.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 53:49

Wow, that's amazing. Well, Dr. Jenn, thank you for all of your wisdom.

D Dr. Jenn Noble 53:54

Oh, thanks for having me. So grateful.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 53:57

Before we go, can you please tell us how can anyone who's listening find you? And also tell us all about your Mixed Life Academy?

D Dr. Jenn Noble 54:06

Okay, so, well, the best place to find me is Instagram. So my handle is drjennpsych with two N's. D-R-J-E-N-N-P-S-Y-C-H. And that's pretty much my handle everywhere: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, although I've just, I'm not good at all those things. I try whatever, but, so those are and then on my website is also drjennpsych.com.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 54:35

And so the Mixed Life Academy is something that I am bringing to life very soon, and it is for parents of mixed-race kids. And essentially, what I was saying that I've been sort of itching to do, which is provide the education, the guidance, the you know, research-backed wisdom to parents, so they can better kind of show up for their kids. I, it's a year-round kind of academy, I'm calling it, but you're, you know, they're gonna get essentially access to me where they can ask some of these questions like you had, but ask them directly to me where we can talk about it, brainstorm, you know? Really figure out how is the best way to help your child navigate this particular specific problem. But then they just get the educational resources resources from me as well. And that's the part that I'm trying to build out as best they can. I really just want it to be a place of a community for parents, so many parents have mixed-race kids that I find, they don't really have a lot of other families with mixed-race kids close by. And so I want this to be a place where other parents can meet each other. And perhaps they're even close, by either a state over a couple cities over. And they can be learning together in the academy. But also, maybe they can meet in real life and have some support for their kids. It is a real powerful thing for a mixed-race kid to, like, meet another mixed-race kid, especially if they're the same mix and really be like, "Whoa, you mean, I'm not the only one out there in the wild."

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 56:19

So those are the main goals of the Mixed Life Academy. So if you go to the website, people can sign up for the waitlist, because like I said, it's still being built. But I really am excited about it. And I just want it to be accessible to as many parents that need it, especially the ones that are really away from diverse communities and away from the the resources that I know exist for mixed-race families, and they're sort of grasping at straws, like, "Please, can someone give me something?" That's what I'm trying to create.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 56:56

Well, that sounds like a dream come true. And I will be there as soon as the doors open. First in line. Thank you so so much for coming on the show. I've learned so much from you. And I know everyone is going to eat this episode right up. So thank you.

D

Dr. Jenn Noble 57:10

Thank you.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 57:12

Can we all just send a collective "thank you" to Dr. Jenn? She is so amazing. There were so many things that stuck out to me while she was talking. But the one that really nestled into my heart was when she said "I'm fully connected to my family." I felt like, wow, like that is such a powerful statement as a multiracial person to hear someone say, "You get to be fully connected

to every part of yourself." I think what's interesting is, even though I didn't grow up in a colorblind home, we talked about race a lot at home, I definitely grew up in a colorblind society. So once I left the doors of my house, race was not discussed, unless we were talking about slavery, and Jim Crow laws, and it was just really damaging for me. My parents were doing amazing work with us at home, but there's so much more that goes into identity development that happens outside the doors of your house, and your parents can only prepare you with so much. So there's a lot that I'm still working through as an adult and as a multiracial person. So if you are also a multiracial person, and you heard this and you felt a little twinges in your heart at different times, or maybe you even got emotional, I just want you to know that I had that right along with you. I'm so glad we have each other.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 58:33

One last reminder to sign up for the waitlist for Season Two of Bite-Sized Black History, because it comes out next week. One week from today, we will be launching Bite-Sized Black History Season Two on February 1. So go to firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory, or visit the link in the show notes, and we will be sure to get you that coupon code.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 58:55

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.