

# 5.6 How to Celebrate Black History Month with Children

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

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**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00  
You're listening to the First Name Basis Podcast, Season Five, Episode Six: "How to Celebrate Black History Month with Children."

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:14  
Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the confidence you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together, we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want: a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:55  
Guess what day it is! Guess what day it is: it is the first day of Black History Month. February 1. And you know what that means? Bite-Sized Black History! Season Two is officially live. I mean what does a girl have to do to get a live marching band of her very own walking by her house to celebrate around here? Just kidding. I'm just so, so stinking excited. Okay, y'all, let me break it down for you: if you're like, "What in the world is Bite-Sized Black History?" let me tell you. So Bite-Sized Black History is the program that I created so that we can celebrate Black History Month together with our kiddos. You can celebrate in your home or in your classroom. It really is your key to a meaningful Black History Month celebration. So what does it include? Bite-Sized Black History is 12 mini podcast episodes—episodes just for kiddos. So every episode is 10 minutes or less, and it highlights a different Black American from history. And a lot of times these are people who have been overlooked by our history books. So these aren't going to be your Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King's; it is so important to learn about those people, but I'm sure you've had ample opportunities to do that. So in Season One, we focused on Olympians,

architects, different scientists, inventors—so many amazing Black Americans. And in Season Two, we are keeping it going. We've got zookeepers, pilots, journalists, astronauts...it is so exciting. Of course, we have civil rights sprinkled in there, because civil rights leaders are critical to our understanding of Black History and the movement. But we want to make sure that we're focusing on the joy, the excitement, the loveliness, that it really is to be a Black American. So that is one part of Bite-Sized Black History, the podcast episodes. The other part is the booklet that goes along with it. So the booklet has an illustration of each of the people that you're learning about. So while you're pressing play on the podcast episode, you're snuggling up on the couch, or you're sitting together in your classroom, you're listening to and learning about a new Black American that maybe you've heard of, but you're not quite sure who they are. And your students or your kiddo is coloring the coloring page, along with the episode. Then, after you finish listening, after the coloring is done, you have reflection questions. So these are questions that go along with the episode that are meant to spark conversation. We really want to help our kiddos see why is this person so important? What can we learn from them? Why do we think they had to do the things they did to succeed in this way? Or what about the struggles in their life can we learn from and emulate? So it really is a transformational program for you and your children, or for you and your students, if you're a teacher. I've heard from so many of you. Last year, we had over 600 families and classrooms invest in Bite-Sized Black History, and I'm just so excited to share it with you again. So on sale right now is Season One: 12 bite-sized podcast episodes, the accompanying booklet, and Season Two. I research and compiled information about 12 different, 12 new Black Americans that we didn't talk about last year. So at this point, we've talked about 24 different people. And I'm sharing it with you today. It is live right now. You can go to [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](http://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory), or you can go to the link in the show notes. Click on the link, check it out. I'm just so excited to see it in your homes, to see it in your classrooms. It is what lights me up. It really is my Black History Month celebration to see you celebrating Black history in such a meaningful way.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:57

So here's what we're gonna do today. I have a little chunk from last year that I want to share with you again, because it really is my guide for how you can celebrate Black History Month meaningfully, and the pitfalls that I think you should try to avoid. So I'm going to do a teeny replay from an episode that I shared with you last year. And then I'm going to give you a sneak peek into Bite-Sized Black History, Season Two. So I took one of the episodes from Bite-Sized Black History, Season Two, and I'm going to stick it after this replay so that you can hear an all new Bite-Sized Black History episode sneak peek. After the sneak peek, I will answer a few frequently asked questions, and then I will send you on your way to go to [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](http://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory) and invest in your very own copy of Bite-Sized Black History for your home or for your classroom so that you can have a meaningful Black History Month celebration. Before we hop into the replay portion, I want to remind you that if you are on our email list, you should have a coupon code for Bite-Sized Black History in your inbox already. And if you are not yet on our email list, you can get on that list right now by going to [firstnamebasis.org/fam](http://firstnamebasis.org/fam) F-A-M. Just get on the email list and we'll be sure to send you a coupon code so that you can get a little discount when you are investing in your Black History Month celebration.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:27

All right, here are some tips that I shared last year that are still incredibly relevant for how to

have a meaningful Black History Month celebration with your children. Okay, so speaking of Black History Month, that is what we are talking about. Today, we are talking all about how to celebrate Black History Month. And in this episode, I'm going to give you a sneak peek into Bite-Sized Black History. Because I just can't help myself. You need to hear this story. But before we get into that, I have to tell you a little confession. I have a confession to make. I feel like Usher: [sings] "These are my confessions..." Okay, anyway, I have a Black History Month confession. And that is that when I was growing up, I dreaded Black History Month. I did not enjoy Black History Month at all. I loved it in my home. It was special in my home with my parents. My dad would always make sure that we understood the power of our culture and our community, and my mom was always so supportive and helping us embrace that. But at school, it was another story. And it was the worst. Honestly, it was the worst. So Black History Month at school was so tough for me, not because Black history itself isn't enjoyable, but because my teachers were leaving out all of the uplifting parts of Black history. I swear we learned about civil rights and slavery, and that was it. We learned so much about Black struggle. Every time we were talking about a Black person at school, it was because they were struggling for freedom, or because they were struggling to overcome racist laws, and it was exhausting. It was draining. It was depressing. It was really hard. And I have these memories of talking about Black history and being so anxious. It just always felt like everyone was looking at me.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 08:34

I have explained before that I grew up in a predominantly white community, which meant that I was one of the only in my class, if not the only, Black person. And all of the students were always staring at me. I'm not sure what they were looking for. It kind of felt like they were looking for me to be like a representative for my entire race. Like "What do you think about this?" Or, "Does this make you sad? Are you going to cry about this?" I remember feeling sad because enslavement is sad. So rights struggles are very sad sometimes, right? And I just remember thinking to myself, "Don't cry, don't cry, please don't cry, don't cry. Everybody's staring at you don't cry." And there's one time when I was in third grade, we were learning about Ruby Bridges. And if you don't remember, Ruby Bridges was one of the first Black children to integrate a white school, and she did that when she was in first grade. And the white people were not happy. They did some pretty terrible things to her including creating a little coffin and a replica doll of her that they would hold up in protest of her going to school with their white children. And so many of the parents actually pulled their children out of the school and out of her class. She was the only person in her class it was just her and her teacher for an entire year. And when I was in third grade, we were learning about Ruby Bridges, and I just remember everyone staring at me, like I said, and thinking to myself, "Don't cry." I was so sad. But I didn't want to cry because it would have been so embarrassing and awkward. And so I asked my teacher if I could go to the bathroom. And I remember the door closing behind me out of my classroom. And just finally taking a breath. It was like I had been holding my breath for, I don't even know how long the length of the entire movie, and I went to the bathroom, and I just let it out. I cried. And I thought to myself, "You've got to get it together. You can't go back in there with red puffy eyes." So I stayed in there for a little while. I cried to myself, and I thought, "This is horrible. I hate learning about this. I don't want to think about this stuff. I just want to be a normal kid." I remember learning about enslavement, and one of the children asking me if I was ever enslaved, or if my parents were ever enslaved. And I was like, "How could you say that? Of course not." Or I remember when I was older, they had this inspirational speaker come to our school and talk to us about bullying. And he told this story about this white kid who liked to hang out with Black kids. And he said the N-word, and the Black kids violently

killed him. And he told this story as a way of saying, like, "Don't do that." I guess, "Don't be so angry about the things that people say that you are violent towards them." And I just remember, like, all eyes being on me. It felt like their stares were asking if I would do something like that. It was like they were saying, "Would you be violent towards us if we said that word?" And it was just an awful feeling.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:52

So I developed this aversion to Black History Month and learning about Black history in general. And what I understand now is that it wasn't just me. It wasn't just me who was damaged by the way that Black History Month was taught when I was growing up. It wasn't just me who was damaged by only focusing on civil rights and slavery, my non-Black classmates and friends began to develop a resentment towards Black history as well, because what child wants to focus on the hard and the heavy every single time? Black History Month is supposed to be a celebration. And this was much more like grieving than it was like celebrating.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 12:41

So all that to say, that is what we are NOT going to do this Black History Month. While the struggle for equity is, of course, a big part of Black history, we really miss out when we overlook the creativity, ingenuity, joy, and brilliance that can be found in the Black community. So here is my number one tip for how to celebrate Black History Month: focus on more than just the struggle. Embrace that creativity. Embrace the ingenuity, embrace the joy, embrace the brilliance. Embrace the innovation of Black people and Black culture. And this is where representation comes in. Representation is so important, not only for Black children, but for white children, too. The reality is that you can't be what you don't see. And it would have been so hard for me to imagine Black people being extraordinary if it weren't for my parents, if it weren't for my home and the way that they embraced Black history and Black culture. And it's really hard for non-Black children to look at Black people from a place of power and a place of joy if they've never seen that, if they've never experienced a Black architect, or they never experienced learning about a Black inventor. So expand your focus, make sure that you are teaching about, of course, the struggle that we have for freedom and for equity, because that is a huge piece of our story, but is not the only piece of our story. Our story is full of power. It's full of beauty and it's full of joy. And that is why I created Bite-Sized Black History.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:42

My friends, Bite-Sized Black History is the program that I wish I had when I was young. It's a program that would have allowed me to share the richness and the beauty of my heritage with my friends and with my classmates. And it really illustrates that Blackness is divine. It's enjoyable, it's powerful, it's inspirational. This program was created to leave your spirit feeling full, not feeling depleted. So let me remind you of how it works. And then I will play an episode for you so that you can have a sneak peek. The Bite-Sized Black History experience is a podcast made just for kids and an accompanying booklet. So there are 12 bite-sized podcast episodes. And each one highlights an amazing Black American. We have nurses, we have inventors, we have physical therapists, and architects, and, of course, civil rights leaders, because they are a big part of the story as well. So you listen to a bite-sized podcast episode together, and then

you break out your booklet. And the booklet has a coloring page, a customized coloring page that I worked with an illustrator to create. And the coloring page is of the person that you're listening to, of the person that you are learning about. So you color while you listen, and then after you listen, you get to dig deep. You get to answer these reflection questions that really help you to unpack the power of the story that you just heard. Why is that person's story important? What can we learn from them? How can we look to them when we need strength or when we need inspiration? I'm so excited for you to use Bite-Sized Black History, because I have heard from so many of you that you want to celebrate Black History Month, but you just don't know how, you don't know where to start. You don't know where to look beyond Dr. King or Rosa Parks. And this is it. This will be such an amazing experience for your family.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:07

Okay, I'm going to stop now. Obviously, I could talk forever about this. But what I really want is for you to experience a little piece of the magic. So without further ado, here is one of the Bite-Sized Black History podcast episodes. And cue my teacher voice, because this is for the kiddo. Anything for the kiddos, am I right? Okay, here it goes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:36

Welcome to Bite-Sized Black History. I'm your host Jasmine Bradshaw. Let's learn together. Hello, my friends and welcome to Season Two, Episode Three of Bite-Sized Black History: "Dr. Ronald McNair, Astronaut."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:01

Dr. Ronald McNair was born on October 21 of 1950 in Lake City, South Carolina. His family was very poor. They lived in a little house that didn't have running water or electricity. Many Black families didn't have much because of the racist, lasting effects of slavery. His parents were really hard workers. His dad was a mechanic, and his mom was a teacher. And they both noticed really early on that Ronald was pretty amazing at tinkering with things. He was so good at figuring things out, that his family gave him the nickname "Gizmo" when he was young. Ronald always talked about wanting to be a pilot. He loved reading about airplanes and learning everything he could about the sky. So it wasn't too surprising that he got really curious about space. When he was seven years old, there was a Russian satellite called "Sputnik" that got launched into space, and Ronald thought that was the coolest thing. He was so curious about it that people said they would find him just looking up at the sky trying to figure it all out.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 19:11

Like I mentioned, Ronald loved to read. One of his favorite places to go was the library, and the library in his town was called the Lake City Public Library. One day when he was nine-years-old, he wanted to check out some library books. So he marched down to the library all by himself to check out some books. He was a little nervous because he knew that the library had a racist policy, and they wouldn't check out books to Black people, but Ronald was determined to get his books. So he tried anyway. He stood in line and waited and waited his turn. When he got to

the front of the line and handed the librarian his books. She said, "Nope, you can't check out books here," and then she told him that he needed to leave, or she was going to call the police. Ronald was like, "Oh. Okay, I'll wait." He climbed up onto the librarian's desk. He sat down on top of it with the books on his lap and waited for the police to arrive. While the librarian called the police, she also called Ronald's mom to come down to the library, too. Ronald's mom walked all the way from their house to the library. And she said every single step she was saying a prayer. She was praying that the police wouldn't take her nine-year-old son to jail. When the police arrived at the library, they asked the librarian what was causing the disturbance—why did she call? And she pointed over at little nine-year-old Ronald sitting on top of her desk. He stayed right where he was, and that's when Ronald's mom walked through the door. The three adults began to talk to each other about what was going on, and Ronald's mom assured the librarian that he would take great care of the books if she let him check them out. The police finally told the librarian to give Ronald a library card and the librarian begrudgingly went to the back and made him his very own library card. Ronald was so excited. He proved to himself and to others that you are never too young to be an activist.

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### Jasmine Bradshaw 21:17

He was the kind of person that if he set his mind to it, he would do it. When he was in high school, he played baseball, basketball, football, saxophone, and graduated as the valedictorian. Valedictorian is the person who has the best grades in the entire school. And all of his hard work really paid off. It earned him a full-ride scholarship to college in North Carolina. When he was in college, he decided to study physics. Now, as if school wasn't enough, his friend said that he also started taking karate lessons. Ronald said he chose karate because he felt like it would help him get better at making important decisions under pressure. He practiced and practiced until he became a black belt. After college, he went to get his PhD at a super impressive school called Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or MIT for short. This is where he specialized in laser research. I know! Doesn't that sound so cool? The last step of getting your PhD is that you have to do a ton of research and write a dissertation. A dissertation is basically a book about everything that you learned while you were in school. Ronald had been working on his dissertation for two years, and he was almost finished when someone stole his book bag. His book bag had all of his research in it. All the work he had done for his dissertation, everything he had learned was inside that bag, and someone took it. That meant that he had to start all over. After working for two years, he had to start right back at the beginning. Even though he was really disappointed, his professor said that he didn't give up. Ronald got right back at it. And it only took him a year to complete his research the second time, because he had done it before. And you want to know what? He said he felt like this version of his dissertation was even better than the first one that had been stolen. He finished his PhD in 1976, and that same year, he won the gold medal in the Amateur Athletic Union's karate competition. After all of his schooling, he went to work for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. You've probably heard it called NASA. And in February of 1984, he became the second Black American astronaut to ever go into space. (The first Black American to ever go into space was a man named Guion S. Bluford, or "Guy," for short.)

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### Jasmine Bradshaw 23:59

Dr. Ronald McNair had officially achieved his dream of becoming an astronaut. On his first flight to space he rode on what was called the Challenger space shuttle, and he served as a mission flight specialist. While he was serving as the flight specialist, the Challenger space shuttle

orbited Earth 122 times. Dr. McNair loved space so much that he wanted to go back. He was ready to go on his second mission in 1986. But unfortunately, when the Challenger Space Shuttle took off, one of the parts malfunctioned and the spaceship exploded. Dr. McNair and the rest of his crew passed away in the explosion. His legacy lives on in many memorials around the country and at the Lake City Public Library, where he got his very first library card. They have a room dedicated to Dr. McNair where children can go and check out all the books they please. If you're wondering how you can carry on this legacy, listen to this quote by Dr. McNair. He said, "This planet is an exquisite oasis. Warmth emanates from the earth when you look at her from space. My wish is that we would allow this planet to be the beautiful oasis that she is, and allow ourselves to live more in the peace that she generates." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:25

That was the story of Dr. Ronald McNair, the astronaut. Can we get like a round of applause, confetti cannon, firework show for Ronald McNair? That man is so amazing. Like, that story has so many twists and turns. It is quite the journey. It's amazing. I am so inspired by him. I really hope you enjoyed hearing that little sample of Bite-Sized Black History, Season Two.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:55

Now I want to share with you a few frequently asked questions. But if you are ready to invest, you know that it is your time to shine, you're so excited to celebrate Black History Month, just go to [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](http://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory) or click the link in the show notes and it will take you right there so that you can purchase Season One and Season Two or one or the other depending on what you need.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:17

Okay, so the number one question that I get asked about Bite-Sized Black History is "What age group does this program work for?" Now, when I was creating Bite-Sized Black History, I was targeting five-year-olds to 12-year-olds. I know that's a big range, but you'd actually be surprised how much the older kiddos love listening to stories. Like, they eat it up. So five to 12 is a good range. But if you have kids that are older than that, or kids who are younger than that, here's what I would suggest. Take the episode that you're listening to right now, go to the portion where I share this sneak peek about Ronald McNair and play it for your kiddo. If they enjoy it, then you know that this is a good investment for your family or for your classroom. So let's say you want to share it with your child's teacher. Send them this episode, they can listen to it, they can understand what the program is all about, and they can decide if it's right for their students. That's exactly what the sample's for, so you can get a really good feel for "Is this right for me? Is this a good fit?" So if you have a kiddo that's under five or a kiddo that's older than 12, just press play and have them tell you themselves. My daughter, Violet, she's four this year, and I feel like she is absolutely ready. I'm so excited to share it with her because last year, she was a little bit too young. And this year, I played her one of the episodes and she was so excited, she went and she told my husband all about what she heard and what she learned. And she's just really raring to go. So I feel like as a four year old, it is a good fit for her. But also, we've been having a lot of conversations, we have laid the foundation in my home about how

to talk about history, especially Black history. So I feel ready for that. And if you do too, I would say go ahead, make the leap. Invest in yourself, invest in your family, go to [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](http://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory), and you can purchase the first two seasons.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 28:12

The other thing I would say is that I have heard of a lot of people using the podcast episodes, but not necessarily the reflection questions because their kids aren't ready for that depth of language. So if that's something you want to do, I'm all for that, too. You get to use this resource how you see best in your home and in your life. And I just hope that it's very enriching. So that is the number one question I get: "What age group is it right for?" I say five to 12 and older than that or younger than that, depending on what your kiddo needs. You know your baby best. So I will leave that there with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 28:48

The other question that I get is, "How long will I have access to the program?" You will have lifetime access to Bite-Sized Black History. As long as Bite-Sized Black History is in the world, if you invest in it, you will have it for yourself, for your classroom, or for your home. I've had a lot of people who want to share it with people that they love, which is absolutely amazing. So let me tell you about the investment options. You can purchase Season One, which is the 12 episodes from last year and the accompanying booklet; Season Two, which is the 12 episodes from this year and the accompanying booklet. You know, what amazing actually? At this point, you could listen to Bite-Sized Black History almost every single day of February. So you can purchase one or the other, or you can purchase a bundle of Season One and Two. You can purchase it for your family or you can purchase it for your classroom. We also have gift cards available. So if you want to buy a gift card for your child's teacher or for your neighbor, you can purchase that for them and then send them the code and they can use that to get themselves a copy of Bite-Sized Black History.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 29:49

And if you're a teacher and you've already bought it for yourself, we also have licenses available. So I want to make it very clear that licenses are specifically for educators. and they are meant to be used for your grade-level team. So let's say you're a second grade teacher who bought Bite-Sized Black History for yourself, and you want to share it with your teammates, absolutely just go purchase a couple of licenses, however many you need to fill out your team, and you can share that information with them. But let's say there is someone else in your school who's not on your grade-level team that wants to use Bite-Sized Black History. Their grade level will need to purchase their own original package of Bite-Sized Black History, and then they can go on to purchase the licenses. The other thing is, if you want to buy it for your whole school, because you think it would be great for everyone in your elementary school, we have whole school packages as well, with 20 licenses for 20 teachers or 30 licenses for 30 teachers. I do want to say that licenses are specifically for educators. So if you're in a family and you've purchased it and someone in your neighborhood wants to use it, too, that person, your friend, will need to go and invest in Bite-Sized Black History for themselves. Or you can give them a copy through a gift card.



J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:04

Okay, I know that's a lot of logistics, so thank you for sticking with that. I just wanted to make it super easy and super clear. Because those are the questions I'm getting the most about licenses and gift cards and all that stuff, which makes me so excited because it means that you want to share it with people you love.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 31:21

My friends, you are ready, you are ready to go off into the world to celebrate Black History Month, to invest in Bite-Sized Black History. We've got our two different seasons, 12 episodes in each season, every episode is 10 minutes or less to keep your kiddos' attention. They're coloring the coloring page that goes along with the episode, and after that you are answering amazing reflection questions that were created to spark conversation to help take what you've learned and nestled into your hearts. It is so exciting. So go to [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](https://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory), or just follow the link in our show notes, and it will take you right there.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:02

Please, if you have any questions or you need assistance, you can email us at [help@firstnamebasis.org](mailto:help@firstnamebasis.org), and we can get anything answered for you. I just can't believe it's finally here. We've been working for so long. We've been looking forward to it for so long. I know some of you have, too, and so I'm just so grateful for all your support. This program is my heart, and I can't believe that I get to share it with all of you. Okay, [firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory](https://firstnamebasis.org/blackhistory). Please take a picture. If you're doing Bite-Sized Black History in your home or in your classroom, take a photo, tag me, because we want to share on our Instagram. If you're not yet following us, get over and do that [firstname.basis](https://www.instagram.com/firstname.basis) on Instagram, so we can share all the celebration together.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:51

I love you all so stinking much, and Happy Black History Month!

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:59

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you, and how deeply I know that when we work together, we can make real change in our communities. Any of the books, podcasts, or articles that I reference will be linked in the show notes. If you are looking for more detailed notes, be sure to head over to our Patreon community. On our Patreon site. I provide all of the outlines that I use to make the episodes and everything is linked there. So you don't have to take furious notes while you are listening. And don't forget to join us over on Instagram at [firstname.basis](https://www.instagram.com/firstname.basis). If you're interested in partnering with First Name Basis or doing some kind of collaboration, please email us at [hello@firstnamebasis.org](mailto:hello@firstnamebasis.org). All right, have a great week my friends, and I will talk to you again soon.

