

6.2 Stricter Gun Laws FINAL

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Six, Episode Two: "Thoughts, Prayers, AND Action: We need stricter gun laws."
- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:17
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 00:53
Hello, First Name Basis Fam. I usually say that I'm so glad that you're here. But I'm coming to you in the wake of a terrible tragedy, and I don't know. It just doesn't feel right to say that. Before we start, I want to give a trigger warning. Today we're going to be talking about gun violence. And it's awful. It is 11pm here in Arizona, and I had a completely different episode planned for today. We were supposed to be talking about Part Two of "Racism is Built on a Big Fat Lie." And I was going to be breaking down different phrases that we often hear and how they literally mean the opposite of the truth, but I'm sure you heard that there was a school shooting in Texas yesterday. And it just feels like I can't do anything but think about and talk about this. There's a writer named Akilah Hughes, and on Twitter she said, "How am I supposed to do anything? How are any of us expected to just keep doing what was scheduled?" And that resonated with me so deeply: I really can't go on with what was scheduled. So here we are.
- J** Jasmine Bradshaw 02:12

I really am a verbal processor. I guess it makes sense that I have a podcast. And I feel like I need a place to say all of this stuff that's on my heart and on my mind. So I hope that you'll hold space for me, and I hope that you'll hold space for yourself as we are all experiencing this collective trauma. Clint Smith, one of my favorite writers of all time tweeted, "These are elementary school children who woke up this morning, who ate their favorite cereal, who tied their shoes in double knots, who laughed with friends on the bus. Now more than a dozen are dead. This isn't normal. It doesn't have to be this way. It can't keep being this way." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:59

And if you're listening to this episode after the fact and the shooting is in the past, I encourage you to continue to listen, because I'm going to be talking about different things that we can do to help reduce and curb the gun violence in the United States. And I feel like even if there hasn't been a school shooting in the last week when you're listening to this, it will still be very relevant.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:26

First, I want to share some personal stuff. And then I will share more practical things that we can do together. Of course, every shooting hits me hard like anyone else. But the ones that have occurred in the last couple of weeks have hit me harder than normal. The shooting that was in Buffalo at that Black grocery store is near where my mom grew up. So my mom grew up in Binghamton, New York, which is upstate, and only about 10 to 15 minutes away from where the shooter lived. And that's actually where my parents met. And my aunt and my cousin—I have Black family members who still live there. So the thought that the shooter might have gone just to a town that was close to him to carry out this mass murder, and it could have affected my family has just really been hitting me super hard. And the students in Texas, they look like my students. As many of you know, I am a former second grade teacher. And my school was predominantly Latine, and seeing the pictures of the students—they just look like the babies who were in my class. And it's just a lot. It's a lot to process. It's a lot to carry.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 04:42

And I think that as a former teacher and as a mom and as a parent and as all the things, I feel like there are so many of us who are trying to grapple with what the heck is happening, and why the heck it still continues to happen. And I wanted to kind of share my experience as a teacher, because it has really affected my life for so many years. So when I was in the classroom, I had to do these active shooter drills—and they never told us if they were real or not, so every time I wondered if they were real, and they were absolutely terrifying—where I would have to run around and lock all the doors and tell the kids to be quiet, and all this stuff. And every single time when they would call the "all clear," I would cry. I would just tell my students, "I will do anything to protect you." And I would cry. And they knew that if we were doing a drill, that meant Miss Bradshaw was going to cry.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:38

And after these active shooter drills, I started to have these recurring nightmares about school

And after these active shooter drills, I started to have these recurring nightmares about school shootings, and I would have one usually about once a week, and the same thing happened in every single nightmare: I would hear the shots going off, and I would say, "It's happening." And then I would go into the mode of trying to protect my students. And I remember as I was packing up my classroom, when I decided to leave so that we could start a family, I thought to myself, "I'm so grateful that I don't have to do these drills anymore. And I'm so grateful that I don't have to be afraid every day anymore." I promise you I thought about it every day as a teacher and thought about what I would do if something like that really happened in my school.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 06:24

We would have to watch these school shooting prevention videos in our staff development trainings. And I remember so clearly that the students were actually represented by balloons. So they would show us different ways that the shooter could come in, different things that the shooter could do, and how we could try to protect our students. And I have one that sticks out in my mind. It was about how it's important that our kids are not sitting in a line or in a clump. And it would show how easy it was to just shoot out these balloons that they had lined up against the wall, or shoot all these balloons that they had all clumped together, and how important it was for us to clump our students but in different places all around the room so that it would be harder for the shooter to kill children quickly. And I just remember sitting there and thinking, "This cannot be real. Like this cannot be an actual staff development training that I'm sitting in right now." But it was totally real, and it absolutely contributed to how horrified and terrified I was everyday in my classroom.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:28

I mentioned that I had these recurring nightmares once a week when I was teaching, and I still have them. They have gone down to about once a month, but I still have them. I actually just had one two days ago. And every time I snuggle up next to my husband and kind of put his arm around me, and he, the other day, woke up and said, "School shooting dream again?" And I said, "Yep." And then we both went back to sleep.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 07:53

My husband, Carter, he used to teach business law at our local community college, and every morning as he walked out the door, I would tell him, "Stay safe, stay safe." And if I ever forgot to tell him, I would text him "Stay safe." And one day he came home and was like, "Why do you always say that to me? Like, I love you, but it's kind of weird." And I was like, "I'm afraid about a shooter. I'm afraid that something's going to happen to you while you're on that campus." And I would make him watch these safety videos about shootings on a college campus and how it's different from an elementary school, and how if you're on a college campus, you need to run, hide, or fight depending on what you can do. And in his classroom, everything was electronic. So he didn't even have a key to lock his own classroom door. It was like this centralized station where they would lock and unlock doors. And he would have to call someone if he needed his door locked or unlocked. And so I was so afraid that something would happen and the person who was supposed to lock the door wouldn't get to lock the door. So I researched ways that he could close his door and keep it shut, just in case anything happened. And what I found was that if you're in a classroom with one of those—if you can picture it, at the top of the door, it

has this like metal hinge thing that's like really long and triangular. It's called a door closer. I looked it up. That's just what they call them. I wish they had a better name for itâ€”but they had this door closer, and I would tell him that what I read is you have to do is take off your belt and wrap it around the door closer so that the person can't open the door, so that you can try to lock the door without actually having it locked. And every day before he went to work I would make sure that he wore a belt to work just in case.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:41

After I left my teaching job, right before I had my older daughter, Violet, I worked at Arizona State University, which is the largest university in the country. And I remember thinking about how dangerous it was to work at the largest university in the country. I felt like being the largest university in the country made us an easy target for something like a shooting. And it scared the crap out of me. And I worked in this office that was really old, like a building on campus that was one of the first ones to go up. And so the office that I worked in only had one door in and one door out. Once I got the job, it was my first week, and it dawned on me that there was only one door in and one door out, so if someone came in, there would be no way for me to get out. And I remember calling my dad on the way home from work and telling him about how scared I was being at the largest university and being in this office that only had one door in and one door out. And the next day on my doorstep appeared this multi-tool, it was a multi-tool that was able to break glass, because I told my dad that I had a window next to my desk, but I had no way to break it. And so my dad got me this multi-tool, and I put it in my desk, and anytime I heard a suspicious noise, I would just open up my desk ready to use my multi-tool.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:58

Another thing I remember is breathing a sigh of relief when my sister graduated with her Master'sâ€”she went to ASU, as wellâ€”and she graduated and I remember thinking, "Thank goodness we don't have anyone in our family who regularly goes to a college campus." I left my job at ASU, Carter was done teaching at the local community college, and my sister had finally graduated. And I was like, "Thank goodness I don't have to think about this so much anymore."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:27

So this might all sound pretty obsessive. I've literally we've been talking for about 10 minutes about how scared I am of shootings and how I prepare for them. And there are many other examples I can give you. In movie theaters, in stores, I'm always aware of the exits and all of that kind of thing. And you might not be as obsessive as I am, but I feel like there's probably something in there that you can relate to, like something that I've shared and experienced, whether you've been a teacher, whether you've just been a parent worrying about your kiddo at school, or thinking about what you would do in this situation over and over again in your head just in case. And it's just not fair. We should not have to live like this. I should not be having recurring nightmares. I should not be breathing a sigh of relief when people aren't going to schools anymore. And I'm getting ready in a year to send my little one to kindergarten. And I can't imagine the new types of dreams I'll be having about her being at school.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 12:27

According to data from the CDC, in 2020, firearms became the number one cause of death for American children and teens. And when I read this, I was like, "That doesn't sound believable. I don't think that's true." My husband is a personal injury attorney, and so I know how dangerous cars can be. I mean, car accidents is what he does. And he talks to me about them, and how to be safe, and how dangerous it really is to get in a car every single day. So when I read this statistic, I was like, "That can't be true." But in the article, they actually addressed this very thing that I'm talking about, this very concern of like, "It must be cars. How could it be guns? It must be cars." So Dr. Lewis Lee, an associate professor of pediatrics and emergency medicine at Harvard Medical School, said, quote, "The decrease in motor vehicle crash deaths in children and young adults is not unintentional. We have excellent data systems for motor vehicle injuries and deaths that we just don't have for firearm deaths." End quote.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 13:30

So now that I shared my personal experiences, and thank you for giving me the space to do that. I know that my life hasn't personally been affected by gun violence. It's just so scary because it kind of feels like a matter of time. And if your life has been personally affected, I don't share my experiences to any way degrade what you've gone through or try to take the spotlight off of the victims. I just hope that people can see that as Americans, we shouldn't have to live like this, and we don't have to live like this, and there are things that we can do.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 14:04

So there is a policy center called Everytown, it's Everytown Research and Policy. And they have an amazing article about how gun safety policies save lives. It was really comprehensive, and it talked about state by state, the different policies that they have in place. And the research about how if you have stricter gun laws, fewer people die from gun violence. Imagine that. It says, "In states where elected officials have taken action to pass gun laws, fewer people die by gun violence."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 14:39

So in this article, it ranks all 50 states on the strength of their gun laws and the categories—they have five different categories. The categories are 1) national leaders, 2) making progress, 3) missing key laws, 4) weak systems, and 5) national failures. So the states are ranked from one to 50. And they're put in these five different categories based on where they're ranked. And I live in Arizona, and Arizona ranks 43rd in the nation. And it is in the "National Failures" category when it comes to gun restrictions. So I encourage you to go on and see where your state ranks and which category it is ranked in. I mean, I wasn't that surprised, honestly, looking at the rankings and seeing that Arizona was towards the bottom, because we are towards the bottom in a lot of things that I care about, and it's awful. So one of the things that they talked about in this article was that the states who are struggling should start with a core group of five foundational laws. So I'm going to share those five foundational laws with you in hopes that you can figure out which laws are in place in your state and which ones you still need to implement so that you can advocate for those laws. One thing I want to note from the

article before I share the five different laws with you is that it says quote, "While each of the top 14 states in the gun law rankings has all five of these policies in place, none of the bottom 14 states maintains any of these critical protections." End quote. So that means the state where I live, Arizona, has absolutely zero of these laws implemented.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 16:30

So let's talk about the five core laws. The first one is passing background checks, passing universal background checks. And for each of these laws, I'm going to share more information from Everytown with you, because they actually have articles about each law. So I went through and I read each one and then I took out kind of a really important piece of the article. So I want to read you a quote about passing background checks. It says quote, "Background checks are the foundation of any comprehensive gun violence prevention strategy. Current federal law requires that background checks be conducted whenever a person attempts to buy a gun from a licensed gun dealer. This is to ensure that the buyer is not legally prohibited from having a gun. While federal law requires background checks for all gun sales by licensed gun dealers, it does not require background checks for guns sold by unlicensed sellers, like non-dealers who sell guns online or at gun shows. This loophole enables people with felony convictions, domestic abuse restraining orders, and other people with prohibiting histories to buy guns with no questions asked. This loophole should be closed to require background checks on all gun sales, not just on the sale of firearms from licensed gun dealers." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:52

So that's the first core law: universal background checks. And I've read a lot of research talking about how most Americans actually agree with this law. So this is something that we should be able to get past together.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:04

The second core law is to implement "Extreme Risk laws. On Everytown it says, quote, "'Extreme Risk' laws, sometimes referred to as 'Red Flag' laws, allow loved ones or law enforcement to intervene by petitioning a court for an order to temporarily prevent someone in crisis from accessing guns." End quote. So basically, these laws are saying if there's a family member, if someone finds a journal, if someone is live streaming and other people see, there would be an opportunity for law enforcement to intervene so that those people can not have access to guns.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:42

The third core law is secure gun storage requirements. It says quote, "Gun owners can make their homes and community safer by storing their gun securely. This means storing them locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition. Securing firearms protects children and adults by preventing unintentional shootings and gun suicides." End quote. So this one's really important to me as a mom of young children. I ask everyone. When my kiddos go to a person's house that we've never been to before I ask them if they have any guns and how they're

stored. It's an awkward conversation. It has made for some angry people, especially close people in my life who I love, but our rule is that if they're not locked up, our kids cannot be over there without us. So they can still go over to this person's house, but they just can't go alone. And like I said, it's not easy as a mom to continue with this role, because it has caused friction in relationships that I really care about. But it's worth it to me, because I would never be able to forgive myself even though the percentage chance of something bad happening is so small. I just can't take the chance.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 19:55

Okay, so the fourth core law is rejecting "Stand Your Ground" laws. It says quote, "'Shoot First,' also known as 'Stand Your Ground' laws, allow people to shoot to kill in public even when they can safely walk away from the danger. These laws threaten public safety by encouraging armed vigilantism. They allow a person to kill another person in a public area, even when there are clear and safe ways to retreat from a dangerous situation." End quote. I think it's important that you remember, or maybe learned for the first time, that a 'Stand Your Ground' law is what was used to justify the murder of Trayvon Martin. George Zimmerman is free because of Stand Your Ground laws. He was able to kill a child because he said that he couldn't do anything else but kill him because he was in danger. So our states need to get rid of Stand Your Ground laws.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:48

And the fifth core law that we need to reject are permitless carry laws. It says, quote, "Concealed carry permitting systems typically require training to carry firearms responsibly in public. 'Permitless Carry' laws, also called 'Constitutional Carry' laws, strip away this critical safety component." End quote. So we need to get rid of these permitless carry laws, we need to make sure that everyone who is carrying has a permit and is understanding of the safety measures that they need to take in order to carry a firearm. So we need to reject permitless carry laws.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 21:27

Isn't that kind of super chilling to hear all five of those laws and how they're completely reasonable and think about the fact that none of those things are implemented? Absolutely none of them are implemented where I live, like I said a little earlier. I really encourage you to go through this article and see where your state lies in the ranking, and how you can help. And it also talks about how we're all interconnected, obviously, in the United States of America. We are all interconnected, and how even if you live in a state that has pretty strict gun laws, if a neighboring state does not have those same laws, it can be really dangerous.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:08

The other article that I want to point you to is an article by the National Education Association. It's called "Gun Violence Prevention," and I will link it in the show notes. I don't have a whole lot to say about it, except that it talks about how we can make school safer. And at the bottom of the article it has links to three different bills that are in front of Congress right now. Now, I'm

not going to go through those bills and tell you what they are, because they're always changing, so if you're listening to this after the fact, you're going to be like, "Well, that bill is gone." So I just encourage you to click the link, because they're always updating those three bills at the bottom of the article and you can see what's going on in the federal sense right now and what we can be doing nationally, as well as in our states.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:51

And if you have people in your life, and maybe you are one of these people, who thinks that what we need to do is arm teachers, or what we need to do is have other people with guns at schools to prevent these shootings or in grocery stores or whatever, you need to understand that during the Buffalo shooting, there was a security guard there who had a gun, who fired back on the shooter and was killed. And the reporting is still really early on the Texas shooting, but I was reading about how there were two police officers and one school resource officer, which is, school resource officer is basically a police officer who's assigned to a school. So there are basically three police officers on campus who were shooting back at the shooter and were not able to stop him from killing lots and lots and lots of teachers and students. So if someone is telling you that all we need to fix this gun issue is more guns or "good" quote unquote, "good guys with guns," just...it's not going to work. It's not going to work.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 23:54

I want to end with two quotes. One is from one of my favorite authors named Austin Channing Brown, and she said, "Anyone who has the power to pass legislation, who instead chooses prayer is both evil and a coward." End quote. I think it's really important as someone who is a believer and someone who is faithful and religious, that I say that obviously I think prayer is fantastic. And also we need to take action. I think that if the Creator is something that you believe in, I hope that you understand that the Creator expects us to take action when tragedy occurs, and when horrible things continue to happen. So we can do that by looking into the laws in our state and federally to try to help curb some of this gun violence.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 24:45

The last quote that I want to share is from Kiersten Nielsen. She's actually our operations director and our graphic designer here at First Name Basis, and she posted on Instagram and it just really hit me. She said "Our children are living in fear and then they are dying in fear. Tiny children. Children with wiggly teeth and cowlicks and velcro shoes and Pokemon backpacks are spending the last moments of their lives huddled in supply closets, reeking of fear and urine, while they shake in terror and sob quietly for their mothers. Little children are dying in pain and fear and the last thing they see is the muzzle of a gun or their classmates' blood. I don't know how to explain to my little children, the ones that I have to send to school each day, that people in this country care more about a make-believe right to a sick and perverted form of entertainment (because that's all it is) "don't give me any BS about protecting your family) than they care about children's right to live and to breathe and to grow up and to get married and to die gently in their beds of old age." End quote.



J Jasmine Bradshaw 25:54

All I can say is that I hope we'll do something, I hope we will change this. I don't know how much more I can take. I don't know how much more any of us can take. And that I am praying and thinking about the victims and the families of anyone who has been murdered by gun violence in the past few weeks. And I'm trying to take action in my state and in my community to try to be the change.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:21

I'm excited to share with you next week the episode that I originally had planned for this week, "Racism is a Big Fat Lie, Part Two," where we will be talking about common phrases that you have probably heard or used yourself that actually mean the opposite of what you think they mean.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 26:41

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.