

# 6.4 Say This, Not That When Someone Comes Out To You

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## SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Elena Joy Thurston

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**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00  
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Six, Episode Four: "Say This, Not That When Someone Comes Out to You" with Elena Joy Thurston.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 00:18  
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 am so glad you are here. And Happy Pride! I'm so excited to be celebrating Pride Month! I always tell my husband, Carter, that our kiddos are so lucky to have two sets of gay aunts who love the crap out of them. And we love the crap out of them right back. I'm just so excited for this episode, because I learned a lot. And one of the things that Elena Joy Thurston shares in the episode I actually, well, a mistake that you should avoid is something that I did to her before we started recording. And so I'm really grateful for the opportunities to learn and to change and to grow, and to be a better ally and a better accomplice. So I hope that this episode is really helpful for you. Let me tell you about it.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 01:39  
I guess first we'll go into how fantastic it is. So I had the opportunity to interview Elena Joy

Thurston, and she is an LGBTQ speaker, trainer, and the founder of the Pride and Joy Foundation. And the Pride and Joy Foundation is an organization that is committed to reducing suicide and homelessness in the LGBT population, specifically targeting youth. So Elena Joy really spends her days trying to solve one of our world's most pressing problems. She was a Mormon mom of four who lost her marriage, her church, and her community when she came out when she was 38. And she has an amazing viral TEDTalk, it has over 40,000 views, where she shares the story, and how she has been able to really embrace who she is, and build up a community around her that loves and supports her. And isn't that what Pride Month is all about? So I'm really, really excited to have Elena Joy on the podcast today.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:49

One thing I do want to mention is that towards the end of the episode, I asked her to share some really practical resources for you. And she gives a fantastic list. And I just want to tell you that all of that stuff is linked in the show notes. So don't feel like you have to furiously scribble things down, just click into the show notes, or go to [firstnamebasis.org](http://firstnamebasis.org) and find the episode on there, and you can have access to everything that she shares. One of the things that hit me the hardest is a statistic that she shared. And she said that in the United States, 30% of Gen Z youth identify as LGBTQ+, and in the UK that percentage goes up to 33%. So basically, if you have three kids or more, you are going to have the amazing opportunity to support and love someone, one of your kiddos, when they come out to you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:45

I was born in San Francisco, California. And I have a really distinct memory. It's actually one of my very first memories, because I only lived there until I was five. And you know those memories that are, like, almost like darkly lit, you know? They weren't at the time, but they are because they're so old. Well, one of my first memories ever is going to a civil union. Gay marriage was not legal yet; this was in the 90s. And gay marriage was not legalized until 2015, unfortunately, so we were at the civil union. It was this couple that were two women, and I remember seeing the ring, that it had all these different colors of gemstones in it, and I thought it was so beautiful. They gave us bubbles; I was very happy about that. And I remember talking to my parents about this when I got a little bit older. I can't remember if I was in middle or high school, but my parents told me in that conversation that 10% of people identified as LGBT. And that percentage like stuck out in my mind so much. And obviously that was a long time ago, and so now we're at this 30% mark, and I'm thinking about the fact that it's beautiful and amazing to see the difference in that percentage. Just see the fact that when I was growing up that number was 10%, and now that number is 30% or higher, and that means that we are finally working towards a community where people feel like they can be themselves. It's not that there are more LGBT people in the world, it's that the LGBT people who are in the world finally feel like they can share that with those of us who aren't LGBT. Like, how powerful is that?

J Jasmine Bradshaw 05:30

And that 10% number. I mean, obviously, I'm telling it to you now, it's a really strong memory in my life. And obviously, I wasn't up on the latest research when I got married to my husband, because I had said to him, I mean, we've been married for a while. But I said to him, when we

got married, "You are one of nine kids." And he was like, "Yeah..." and I said, "10% of people identify as LGBT. So the percentage chance of you having a gay person in your family is like, pretty high, just considering how many people you have, right?" So we feel super lucky to know and love our LGBT family members, and we are so grateful that they've shared this sacred part of themselves with us, and we also wish that we had done more on our end to create safe environments, and to have the tools in our back pocket for how we could support them while they're going through the coming out process. So that's what this episode is about. That's what this episode is for. I am preparing as a mama to support the LGBTQ+ kiddos in my life, whether they be my own or my kids' friends. I'm just really grateful that Elena Joy Thurston took the time to share her knowledge, her expertise, her story, her heart with us. So I hope that you enjoy this episode and learn a lot.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 06:56

Now before we jump in, June is an exciting month for so many reasons, of course, Pride, but also because of Juneteenth. So we have our brand new program, Juneteenth Jubilee, out now just for you. And it has everything you need to plan a meaningful Juneteenth Celebration dinner. So I've heard from a lot of you that you're just not quite sure what Juneteenth should look like in your home and in your family. And for us, Juneteenth has so much to do with a special meal that we make and the way that we celebrate together is by sitting around the table and reflecting on what Juneteenth means and how we can grow and change because of this really sacred holiday. So our Juneteenth Jubilee program has so many fun things for you to do, including a cookbook full of my family recipes that you can use on Juneteenth, a cooking show that I made with my dad "it's so stinking fun. It's called Cooking with Ken and he teaches me how to actually make these family recipes. And by watching you'll be able to learn along with us. And then we have a meal planner and a shopping list. We've got placemats for your table. We've got place cards "there's just so much really fun and meaningful aspects to this program. My favorite, favorite, part are the reflection questions, and we've created two sets of questions, one for Black families and families with Black kiddos and one for white families and families who are non-Black people of color, because this celebration will look different whether you are Black or not. So please go and invest in Juneteenth Jubilee. You can find all the fun at [firstnamebasis.org/juneteenth](http://firstnamebasis.org/juneteenth). I will put the link in the show notes and we have a coupon code going on right now. You can use the code LOVING15. That's all-caps, one word, L-O-V-I-N-G, the number one-five. LOVING15 to get \$15 off of Juneteenth Jubilee until June 13 of 2022. So go and get it and enjoy it. I love you and I can't wait to see you celebrating Juneteenth together.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 09:06

All right, all right, here comes Elena Joy!

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 09:10

Oh my goodness, Elena Joy. Thank you so much for being here. I'm so excited.

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 09:15

Thank you for having me. This is gonna be awesome. Really excited.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:20

I...you all have to know, all you listeners need to know I just spent like 20 minutes pouring my heart out to Elena, so we are really on a first name basis now. Elena Joy can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your work with the Pride and Joy Foundation?

E Elena Joy Thurston 09:34

Absolutely. So hi, I'm Elena Joy. My pronouns are she/her and I'm the executive director and founder of the Pride and Joy Foundation. Our mission is to reduce the rate of suicide and homelessness in our community, our LGBTQ community. And we do that in a variety of ways. And one is empowering parents with the information and knowledge that they need to be the advocates that their loved ones need them to be.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:00

I love that you are giving tools to parents, because I hear from a lot of parents that they're like, "Okay, where do I go? Where do I look?" So that is fantastic. You know, one of the main reasons I asked you here because is because I really want to know how people can do a better job when their loved ones are coming out to them. Because when someone tells you, "Oh, my goodness, I'm gay," and it's this, it can be this tender and sacred experience. Or sometimes it can be totally awful for them. Or maybe it's somewhere in between. I'm wondering if you can share some common mistakes that straight people make when someone comes out to them? And just a few tips, like how do we avoid those mistakes? What should we say that can be much more affirming and loving?

E Elena Joy Thurston 10:44

Absolutely. So I'm gonna kind of put a twist on that, I'm gonna take it...first, I'm going to give some tips on some things to do. And then I'll give some tips on some things not to do. So that way if we only have enough brain space for one, we'll get the most important one.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 10:59

Brilliant, yes.

E Elena Joy Thurston 11:01

So when someone comes out to you, and the circumstances can be so varying. They can be from like a casual coming out, a coworker at work, right? Or it can be your kid, who feels incredibly vulnerable. Or in my case, it could be your parent. Right? I was coming out to my

teenage kids. And so the really unifying factor between all of those, is what they're saying is something incredibly vulnerable, vulnerable about themselves. And they're very concerned about the future of your relationship. Right. So those are the things that we kind of want to address the first. And so first, what we can do is say, you know, "Thank you for trusting me with this information," right? And "Thank you for your vulnerability." But I always suggest the next thing to respond with, and this has been incredibly well received by both my community and parents as well, is to say, "Do you feel safe? Do you feel safe at home? Do you feel safe at work? Do you feel safe at school? Do you feel safe at church? Do you feel safe with your friends?" Right? So as we're giving those questions, what we're communicating is, number one, is safety is priority. And that is how we're expressing love to them. But also, it can allow you for a little bit of time, because if you got a little shocked, right, and you're really not sure what to say, it really kind of helps to engage that other part of your brain, almost that analytical part of your brain and give them time to really communicate what their experience is and give you time to really settle into the moment.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 12:36

Wow, wow, okay, yeah, I am going to write that down and put it in my journal, because that's so brilliant. Do you feel safe where you're at? And then, like, is the second part of it? How can I support you? Or how can I help make things safer for you?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 12:50

Absolutely. Right. And that, what they tell you like, yeah, you can respond to but you also don't have to. Like, don't feel like that's, unless you're their parent, and they're really in danger, obviously, then you really need to respond. But someone might say, "Yeah, I'm doing okay, you know, I came up to my parents, and they haven't really had a great relationship with me since then. But we're really working on it. And I'm hoping it'll get better." And so if this is a peer or a coworker or something that could you don't have to fix that, right? You can just like acknowledge that and take that information into the context. Or if your child says, "You know what, school is really good. I've actually already come out to a few of my friends." And then of course, your mom heart has a twinge because they didn't come out to you first. That's very, very difficult, right? But you go forward with that, and be like, "Okay, so school's okay. So how's church?" You know, and that is really important thing to ascertain. Wherever they're spending more than a few hours a week at, we really need to make sure that they're feeling safe.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 13:48

Wow. Okay. I have kind of a follow up question. When you said that the child might have come out to friends before the mom, I have a friend who that happened to her. And I'm wondering, like, how can I support her in that and working through those feelings? Do you have any ideas?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 14:03

I mean, it's, yeah. Because unfortunately, and let me be clear, I went through this as well. And I am an out person. Like, I am a very out and proud lesbian. Obviously, all of my family knows that. And yet when my daughter came out, she came out to her friends first. So I think the very

that. And yet when my daughter came out, she came out to her friends first. So I think the very first thing is to say, "This is actually not a knock on your relationship. This is truly about them." And the conversations that came up and they they probably practiced a few times on other people whose relationships were not as crucial to them before they came to one of the most important relationships in their lives.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 14:44

Wow, wow, okay. Okay. Thank you for that, because I really feel like that is a great way of helping someone see like, this is not about you without saying "this isn't about you right now." Love that. Okay, so we talked a little bit about the things that you can and should say, will you go over a little bit of the mistakes or things that we should avoid saying?

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 15:08

Absolutely. So number one is, "Well, this could be just a phase, honey, this could be trendy, you're trying to be trendy," and I promise, no one has been attracted to the same gender or started to identify as a different gender, because it's trendy. Like we might dress differently, we might wear our hair makeup differently for trends. But there's not a lot of deep inner behavior that we're going to engage in, especially behavior that gets us ostracized. We typically don't engage in that because it's a tender phase. The phrase, and this is quite often, "Well, this will take some time." Like, we know that, like we really do, and we're going to be continue to be aware of that for probably the next year, or two or three in our relationship. It doesn't have to be said, because unfortunately, in that vulnerable moment when the stakes are really high, and those are the words that have been chosen, ow it feels is, "Wow, there's something so gross about me that it's going to take them time to get used to me." And that's and that goes along with the phrase, "I love you no matter what," because it has the same context. "No matter what? This is so gross that you like have to overlook it and tell me you love me no matter what?" Right? So. And that one is the most common. In fact, that's what my ex-husband said to our daughter was, "I love you no matter what," and then wondered a year later why they had a horrible relationship. And it was because it didn't go any further than that. And I think that's a really common problem is parents will say, "Okay, well, I said, I love you no matter what, I gave him a big hug. What more do they want from me?" And then unfortunately, a fact that we have to acknowledge is that LGBTQ+ children are some of the only marginalized population of children born to parents not of the same marginalized population. Right? And so this very much ties into your work and your audience of, you know, when you have aBlack child who's has been adopted by white parents versus raised by Black parents, like that's a very different dynamic, right?

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 17:21

Huge,

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 17:22

Or it's also often with children that are born deaf to hearing parents. Like, deaf culture is its own culture, language, vocabulary, right? It's the whole thing. And when parents aren't

integrating that culture into their family culture, then it just creates more evidence to the child that they're other and that they're different.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 17:44

Yes, absolutely. And when you said, "I love you, no matter what," that reminded me of another really common thing that I hear from especially religious people, is that they'll say, "I love them, but I don't condone you." Well, they don't even say "I don't condone their actions," they'll say, "I don't condone the lifestyle that they're choosing." And that "€" I mean, I just get so frustrated. I just want to roll my eyes and walk away. But I feel like as my, my responsibility as a straight person, and with the privilege that I hold, is to respond. But I'm not quite sure what the best response is to that. So do you have any ideas of like someone saying, "Well, I love them, but I'm not going to condone their actions." What do we say back?

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 18:28

Yeah, I love that. Because I actually have a history of that in my own life. I mean, I didn't come out publicly until I was 38. I didn't even come out to myself until I was 37. And in that time of my adult life, I was in a very conservative, high-demand religion community. And so a phrase that I actually often said was, "You know, we're supposed to hate the sin but love the sinner, right?" Like that came out of my mouth more than a few times. And when I think about that now, of course, I think, "Okay, well, that's putting the focus on the behavior instead of the identity. Being queer is who I am. It's not what I do," right? And frankly, love is never sin, ever. And that includes unconditional self love. And so if we are if we're saying, "I love you, but I don't support you in unconditionally loving yourself," that doesn't work. That's not love.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 19:28

Yeah, mic drop. Wow, yeah. "Love is never a sin." I really like that. That needs to be on a t-shirt. Okay, so the Pride and Joy Foundation which you founded, amazing, you are specifically supporting LGBT kiddos and trying to reduce the rate of suicide. I'm wondering what are a few things, maybe three things, that people who hold straight privilege can do to help with that effort.

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 20:00

Wow, gosh, I love this question. There's so much goodness here. So first of all, there's an incredible statistic out there that when an LGBTQ+ child has a safe trusting adult in their life, their risk of suicide goes down by 40%. Just one adult in their life. Isn't that incredible? So could you be that safe adult? And what would that look like for you? Would that look like, you know, doing some research into the culture or maybe reading a book or two, and then being able to really clearly say, and state in some way, like, "I am an ally and this is why." It also know that the, at the public school level when we have, it's called the GSA, which often stands for Gay-Straight Alliance, or Gay Student Alliance, right? or Diversity Clubs, because a lot of schools aren't allowing GSAs now, but they'll allow a Diversity Club. So when schools have something like that, an active program that is embracing peoples' differences, all the children in that

school experience a 30% drop in depression and anxiety. So when we have parents in the school district, whether their kids are LGBTQ+ or when they're not, it's even more powerful. Parents saying, "I am very concerned about the mental health of the children at the school. I want to make sure that there's a GSA or Diversity Club active on campus. What can I do to make that happen?" Because the school districts are not listening to the LGBTQ kids. And they're barely listening to those parents. So when, the more parents that can say, "This is a priority for us, and we want this to happen in our school district, because we know it decreases depression and anxiety by 30% for all the students across the board," that's huge. That's so big.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 21:47

Yeah, and it kind of reminds me of the way that homophobia, racism, patriarchy really does hurt everyone, even the people who hold the privileges that are supposed to be supported by these oppressive systems.

E Elena Joy Thurston 22:02

Mm hmm. Absolutely. The more that we can embrace that... You know, when when we have other marginalized communities seeing protection, seeing people coming in and valuing the most different, the most other, that's sending a very clear message to all marginalized communities that they are seen and supported and valued.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:24

Yes. Okay, I cut you off, you're going to share another idea.

E Elena Joy Thurston 22:29

Yeah, another big part of it is to just talk about suicide. There's an incredible stigma around it, and people are really afraid to use the words. I went through...I actually put myself in conversion therapy, which is a practice to try to "cure you," I say in air quotes, of homosexuality. And 57% of people who go through that practice end up suicidal, and 98% struggled with suicidal ideation for the rest of their lives. And that's where I am. And so if I want to be a mom who's there for her children, my children need to know that I'm going to go through times where I have suicidal thoughts. And they need to know that I have a support system around me, like my partner, like my sister, and my therapist, those are all of my red flag people that know that they need to be aware of those times that I go real deep, because that could be life altering. So the more I talk about it, the less stigma there is around it, and the more power that I claim back. So when we can talk about it, just like we talked to our kids about drugs, just like we talked to them about unprotected sex, we can also talk to them about, there's a certain chemical that can get triggered in your brain that takes you from just having a bad day, to either wanting to harm yourself or end your life to, to end the pain. Because often the emotional pain really becomes a physical presence in your body. And that's the result that



we get to is the suicidal ideation. It doesn't happen to everyone, and it might never happen to you. But if you ever get to that point, know that it's a chemical in your brain and come to mom, and let's work it out.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 24:04

Wow, thank you for the very clear steps. And I feel super lucky because my mom is well, she's retired now, but all growing up, she was a clinical psychologist. And it was yes, it was like, you know, pros and cons to having a psychologist mom, mostly pros, mostly pros. But one of the things she helped me really understand is that talking about suicide does not make it any more likely for it to happen. Like if someone is thinking or having suicidal ideation, it's already happening whether you say that it is or not, whether you acknowledge it.

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 24:40

That's right. Absolutely. Absolutely. And the fact is, is that LGBTQ youth are 40% more likely to consider suicide. Now we really need to distinguish and this is another action that an ally can do for our community is to distinguish this: mental illness is not caused by our orientation or gender identity. It's caused by how society reacts to our sexual orientation or gender identity. Right? There's those are very, it's very distinguished. And it's a difference, and we need to really be aware of it, because we have to fight back on this idea that like, "Oh, okay, you're gonna have a really hard life if you're LGBTQ+, because you're going to struggle with depression and maybe even suicide." Well, no, it's not caused by their orientation, it's caused by the day to day microaggressions that we go through for the rest of our lives.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 25:37

Yes, yes. It's like the difference between saying, "They couldn't eat at those lunch counters, because they were Black," and "They couldn't eat at those lunch counters because of the racist policies."

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 25:48

Yes.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 25:50

Like, there's nothing wrong with me being Black. I actually really love it. Oh, that's so good. Okay, thank you. That's fantastic. So now that we've covered some of the heavier stuff, all very important, but I'm really excited to kind of transition into the celebration of it. It's, we're coming up on Pride Month, and I know there are some families who want to participate. So first, let's talk about, like, why is Pride Month so important? And if you were talking to a young kid, because most of our listeners are families who have young children, how would you explain to them like what Pride Month is and why it's so important?

E

**Elena Joy Thurston 26:25**

Well, first of all, they probably already know. They probably know better than their parents do. But no, with our real little ones, and I'm a mom of four, and I, unfortunately, never took that opportunity. When my "my youngest was eight when I came out. And so I had three go through that age before then, and I never took the opportunity to say, "There's this amazing month where we get to celebrate the beauty that is love in all forms." And I really wish that I had, and so I'm so grateful to have this question, because I think back and like, how would I have communicated that to my kids if I were in that situation now. And I think the biggest example that I can give is where I live, we live in an HOA, a homeowner's association, and we're only allowed to fly the Pride flag in the month of June, even though I'm gay all year. Right? I'm only allowed to fly it in the month of June. And so that's just one example of that. There are so many ways during the month of June, that we're kind of allowed to really be our own authentic selves. And that in and of itself is such a great need for celebration. Right? So I think there's a lot of different things that we can do. And the first one is to start thinking about how can I learn about the culture, right. And this could be as literally as simple as watching Queer Eye on Netflix, or reading some books. I highly suggest, there's an incredible newsletter. It's called "Queerency," it's like currency, but Queerency, and it's a great email newsletter that comes out. And it just gives them incredible bullet points about what's going on in the culture right now. They also have social media feeds everywhere. So just pick however you want to digest the information. And it's so powerful to just know like, "Oh, this is going on, and that's going on. And this is an idol, like an icon in that community, okay, good for me to know," right? Like, it's just a really great way to start incorporating the culture. But also seriously, for the month of June, try try try to support queer-owned businesses. So whether that's clothing or jewelry, or it could be the queer accountant in the neighborhood, or the queer plumber in the neighborhood, or whoever it is, you know, if you're gonna get your house painted, can you find one that month? Can you find one that's LGBTQ? And the reason I say this is because the rate of homelessness is quite high in our community. And on one hand, that's because of our youth, actually, 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ, they've been kicked out of their homes, and they are now on the streets. And a lot of them are also foster children who have been kicked out of foster homes. And that's a whole nother thing that we can go down. But the other part of it is that the more authentic people live, oftentimes, it's harder for them to get a job, especially in rural or conservative areas, right? If, if their hair color is a little different, if they have one too many piercings, if they talk or gesture a certain way, right? It's going to be harder and harder for them to assimilate into corporate America. And so they often will try to run their own business instead to try to have that autonomy. And as we know, in America, it's incredibly hard for small businesses right now. So more you can find and support the better.

J

**Jasmine Bradshaw 29:42**

Yeah, well, I like how you connected the reality of what's going on with small businesses, with the reason behind it. I think that's something...I mean, I didn't know that. So being able to see that connection really helps me to know why it's so important. Obviously, it's always important to support small businesses. I really like the reasoning the why behind it? Yeah, I'm, I'm, as you were talking about Pride Month and things we could do with our family, I was thinking about, if I took my family or if you know, a hetero family went to a Pride celebration or a march or something like that. I'm wondering, what are some ways that we can make sure that we're centering the LGBT community and not like taking up space in those places?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 30:25

That's a great question. So I think that question is more applicable in spaces like, like a gay bar, right? Or a lesbian bar, like, those are places where people are going to assume that you are queer there, and so they might get in a conversation with you. You might start a relationship, and then X-amount of time into that, even if it's just at the end of the night, you're like, "Okay, going home to my husband, bye?" That's a little ridiculous. Um, but no, when it's one of the more family-oriented events, like the parades or the festivals, really, it doesn't. The only way that you could center yourself is when you start to have a conversation with maybe someone who's running the booth or something, and then you just start going off about your own experience. Right? My cousin came out, and then my aunt disowned them, and then this happened, and this happened. And this happened. Right? Like, "Yeah, we all have that story, honey."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 31:21

We heard it before. Yeah,

E

Elena Joy Thurston 31:22

Yeah. So go find the other allies and share those stories. Because those stories are important. You know, secondhand trauma is real. And when you see a cousin get completely disowned from the family, when you're a kid, that's real. And it does need to be processed and really considered as part of your own internalized stuff that's going on. So definitely acknowledge it, but just don't put it on a member of the marginalized community, right?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 31:48

Yes, absolutely. Yeah. Thank you for that reminder. Okay, I want to get some, like really tangible resources into the hands of parents or teachers who are listening. So my first question is, do you have any favorite picture books that feature LGBTQ plus characters?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 32:06

Oh, my gosh, so many, and I'm gonna give you the resource first, and then I'll just tell you a few of their titles. So there's an incredible nonprofit called Pride and Less Prejudice. So [prideandlessprejudice.org](http://prideandlessprejudice.org).

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 32:18

Oh, that's really cute.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 32:20

Elena Joy Thurston 32:29

Isn't it cute? And what it is, is they're they're just incredible. It's run by a mom and daughter team, the daughter's out, the mama's now an incredible ally. And what they've done is they collect donations to purchase LGBTQ-based books and send them to elementary school classrooms. So the teachers can sign up for free book bundles. And we can donate so that they can purchase those books and get them sent so that we can get inclusive books to all the elementary school classrooms. And so if you go to their website, they have a book gallery, where they have the titles and the book covers, and they're just beautiful. They're people of color. They're all kinds of gender identity and sexual orientation. And they're all geared for like, sixth grade and lower, you know. First grade second grade. I will say my favorite is "Heather has Two Mommies."

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 33:10

Yeah.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 33:12

But there's a really beautiful one about a grandfather that's gay and has a partner. It's called "A Plan for Pops." It's so cute. There's a great one about gender identity called "It Feels Good to Be Yourself." That one is really lovely. There's some from the perspective of the parents, some from the perspective of the kid, you know, it's just, there's so many out there. So don't feel like you can't find them. They're there.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 33:39

I love that. And I will link Pride and Less Prejudice in the show notes. And then all the titles that you mentioned, I will link those as well, just so that if you're listening, and you're like, "I need to get my hands on this book," just go to the show notes, and it'll be right there. Okay, fantastic. And we also know how important it is during, like, a cultural month, or a celebration month and awareness month, that we are redistributing our resources and our wealth specifically to that community. So, of course, people can share and donate to the Pride and Joy Foundation. But are there other organizations that you love their mission and you feel like they would be a good fit for families to donate to?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 34:18

Absolutely, there's always two resources that I suggest everyone have in their back pocket. One is Trevor Project. They're the huge national LGBTQ nonprofit, and they run, one, an incredible crisis hotline. So every time I teach a suicide prevention workshop for our youth, I always include their hotline as well as their text hotline. It's so, so good. So even if that's all they did, they're worthy of your donation. But the other thing that they do is they fund incredibly huge research projects so that we can get some of those peer-reviewed statistics about, are we more likely to commit suicide? What does it, what kind of impact does one safe

adult have on an LGBTQ child? What kind of impact does a diversity club have on a high school? Right? They're the ones that run those studies. And all of us activists, we use the results to get our points across. They're really important.

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 35:17

The other thing I always suggest is every state has a nonprofit. I call them watchdog groups. They are watching the state legislature, seeing what kind of bills they are trying to pass, figuring out what kind of economic impact that's going to have on your state, and they're letting the business leaders know, "Hey, your politicians are trying to pass this bill, and it's not going to be good for your business." And it's, to me, that's like one of the most effective ways to create change, is to get the politicians and the business leaders and get them looking at each other. So mostly, it's going to be called Equality...whatever. Like, Equality Utah. In Arizona, it's called One Community. And so basically, you're just looking for that organization that you can get on their newsletter list, maybe send them a donation, and really get aware of what your politicians are trying to do in your state.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 36:11

I know that anybody who has listened to me in the past knows that I believe that policy change is really the root of how we can fix so many issues, because policy is how systemic oppression is perpetuated. So I really liked that you brought up the specific policy options.

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 36:29

Yeah, they're so powerful. And I'm just so grateful that there are people who are willing to engage in that work. Because the few times that they've called on me to testify at the state house or something, just doing that is so emotionally draining. I can't imagine working in it full time. And I'm so grateful for the people that are willing to do it.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 36:50

Yeah. Okay, before I ask you to share about where people can find you, I really was wondering if, let's say somebody listened to this whole interview, and they're trying to figure out what to do next, like what they can do this afternoon or tomorrow in order to talk to their kids or their family, what would you say is the one, like, next first step that they can take?

**E** Elena Joy Thurston 37:14

So I often teach a class, sometimes to corporations, sometimes to churches, or schools, and it's a class called "Queer, Dykes, and Other Words I'm Too Scared to Say."

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 37:26

That's fantastic.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 37:28

And it really goes over a lot of the vocabulary, but not just vocabulary, but the context for the vocabulary, the history of the vocabulary, right? And then how it's being applied and used today, especially with our youth. And it's really important to recognize that we have statistics that are telling us that up to 30% of Gen Z is identifying as LGBTQ. This is a marked difference, you know? The millennials, the highest statistic I can find is 15% for millennials, but when you get to Gen Z, we're looking at 30% in the US and 33% in the UK. So that's big. That is one in three. So if you have three kids or more, eventually, statistically, one of them is going to come out to you. So being aware of that is a really big deal. So I would suggest getting comfortable with some vocabulary. And oftentimes at the end of that class, when I'm teaching it, I say, "Okay, if you have kids, I want you to go home, and at your next family dinner, we're all sitting around casual, like say, 'I learned about non-binary people today. Do you have any non-binary friends?'" and they always do all of them. And you will have a conversation that you would never have had otherwise. And that's a really great way to bring it up. And because it's a little bit distanced, right? Unless they identify as non-binary themselves, which is also a great way to open that topic. But to be able to say, "Yeah, my friend, Alex identifies as non-binary and these are the pronouns they use." And then you can say, "Alright, are there a lot of people that use pronouns? Are they being like, kind of different by asking for people to use those pronouns? Like, how's that working in your, like, ecosystem?" And it can create a really beautiful conversation.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 39:14

Now, of course, that's with teenagers. And if you want to look at younger kids, you can even say then, "Do you have any friends at school who have two moms or two dads? Or maybe they just have a grandma or grandpa?" Like, "What do your friends' families look like?" And being able to have that conversation of course, again in another way, of how all families look different and all families are wonderful and valid.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 39:39

Love it. Those are fantastic first steps and so doable. And I think I want to just remind people that as you're having these conversations, it's okay to stumble. It's okay to not have all the answers. You can say you don't know, but just commit to figuring it out together.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 39:54

Yeah, absolutely. Yes, vulnerability is never a bad thing for sure.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 40:00

Okay, so as we wrap up, I'm sure people are going to want to connect with you. And you're also a sneaker so they can invite you to speak at their school or at their organization. Can you tell

a speaker so they can invite you to speak at their school or at their organization. Can you tell us where to find you?

E

Elena Joy Thurston 40:10

Absolutely. So the nonprofit side of it is [prideandjoyfoundation.org](http://prideandjoyfoundation.org). And then my speaking side of it is [elenajoyexperience.com](http://elenajoyexperience.com). So you can get information on both of those sites about the speaking and the possibilities that are there. But yeah, it's been really incredible, because what we found is that when people are at work, they're a little bit more willing to learn and listen and maybe acquire a new skill, right? And then once they have, once I've been able to do a training or talk about inclusion and what that looks like and feels like, then it's not like their allyship stops at the cubicle, right? Like they go home to their families, and they go home to their kids' schools, into their faith communities, and they're able to create that incredible ripple effect, which is really cool. So yeah, if I can serve any of your communities, please let me know.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 41:02

Elena Joy, you are such a joy. Thank you for being here.

E

Elena Joy Thurston 41:05

Thank you. This is great.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 41:08

Did you learn as much as I did? I learned so much from Elena Joy. I'm so grateful. And y'all guess what. I really am the luckiest because she lives here in Arizona. So I'm hoping someday we can get together in person and share a meal together. It would be so fantastic.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 41:24

All right. Go celebrate Pride Month, become a better ally or accomplice, and if you are a member of the LGBTQ community, we love you so much. We're so grateful that you exist and so grateful that you share yourself with us, and we feel totally honored to be able to be alongside you on this journey.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 41:44

Don't forget that Juneteenth is coming up and you can get your hands on our brand new program Juneteenth Jubilee, at [firstnamebasis.org/juneteenth](http://firstnamebasis.org/juneteenth). Use the coupon code LOVING15 for \$15 off. And if you don't want to remember all of this, it's okay, just go to the show notes. Click around in there and you will find everything you need.



J Jasmine Bradshaw 42:07

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