

# 7.9 Children of Color in Schools: The Stories Behind the Sta...

Mon, Oct 17, 2022 8:39PM 58:13

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, documentary, paul, stories, jasmine, happening, country, students, understand, children, conversation, fairness, important, education, implicit bias, talk, film, first name basis, stacey, defining

## SPEAKERS

Paul Forbes, Stacey DeWitt, Jasmine Bradshaw

---

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Seven, Episode Nine, "Children of Color in Schools: The Stories Behind the Statistics."

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 competency 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, because you are in for an amazing interview. I had the opportunity to interview Stacy DeWitt and Paul Forbes. They are the producers and directors of a documentary called "Defining Us: Children at the Crossroads of Change." And oh, wow. Oh, wow. This documentary...as soon as you are done listening to this episode, you're going to want to run to watch this documentary, because it was so amazingly done. I "you know, me. I was crying, of course" but not just because I am a former teacher. Because the children in this documentary and the stories that they share and the power that they hold to help us make change in our society is truly inspiring. It, like it seriously got me so jazzed. And so like on fire, I was like, "Yes, we can do this. Our kids are doing this, we can do this!"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:52

Jasmine Bradshaw 01:55

So let me tell you a little bit about the documentary, Stacy and Paul, and then we will jump right into the interview. But before we start, I have to give you a trigger warning. Because during the interview, Paul and I get so real and raw. And we talk a lot about the murder of George Floyd and how that affected both of us. And so if that is something that you can't or don't even want to carry today if you're Black or Indigenous person of color, please, please take care of yourself. You know, I always say this. You're probably tired of hearing this at the beginning of every episode, but I think it's so important that you know that your mental health and your safety are our number one priority here at First Name Basis. And so if you are a person of color, especially my Black siblings, please, please take care of yourself. But know that that is what's coming up in this episode, because it's really important.

Jasmine Bradshaw 02:46

So in this documentary, "Defining Us: Children at the Crossroads of Change," we follow a handful of students from across the country who are going through astronomical challenges in their lives, and who are using education to propel them forward, and who are leaning into the mentors and teachers in their community to be able to really press on. Some of them are facing things that a lot of us could really never imagine. And in this documentary, Stacey and Paul really dig into what it means to be standing at the crossroads of change, because the children of this generation are truly facing a world that is in the middle of a huge shift, especially socially. And if you have spent any time in education, you know that race is the number one indicating factor of the success of students here in our nation. And to me, I'm like, how could you ever possibly argue against the reality of systemic racism when we have a statistic like that? And I'll break it down with Stacey and Paul. But I'm just so passionate about this, because education is what brought me here in the first place. As y'all know, I used to be a second grade teacher. And when I left education to start my family, I had a lot of time to reflect. I was just thinking about what would I have done differently? Like what could I have done to be a better teacher to those kiddos that I loved so much. And as I started to really get into it and explore, the thing that I realized "the thing that was missing in my teaching" was anti-racism. And that's why I'm so passionate about sharing this with you, because I don't want you to miss out on that thing that I wish I had.

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:36

So if you're a parent listening, you're thinking, "Well, I'm not a teacher." This is something that you can be advocating for in your child's school. And really a justice-oriented lens and an asset-based lens like that is what I was missing. And so this documentary just hit home for me because I was like this. I wish I had seen this before I became a teacher, because my teaching probably would have been wildly different and, I obviously what I know now, like, I would be a completely different teacher, and maybe that will happen someday. But I just really want to give you the tools that you can do this, whether it be in your classroom or bringing it to your child's teacher, because anti-racism is transformational for all students "here that" for ALL students, but especially for students of color.

Jasmine Bradshaw 05:23

So let me tell you about Stacey and Paul. Stacy DeWitt is the director and executive producer

of "Defining Us," and she is amazing. She is an Emmy Award-winning producer, journalist, and attorney. The thing that stuck out to me most in her bio was her passion for storytelling. It said, "She developed a deep understanding of the emotional power of storytelling through video, and its impact on behavioral change." And we really will talk about that in the interview. She has produced over 65 documentaries, and so many of them have been focused on children and families. So this really is her passion, it's helping the world see these children and families and what they're going through and helping the world understand what they can do about it.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:08

Now Paul Forbe, is the Executive Producer and Director of Partnerships at Defining Us. And he is an anti-bias and educational equity consultant who focuses on implicit bias, or what he refers to as "the work behind the work." Y'all I was totally fangirling when I first was able to talk to Paul, because I was like, "You are doing the real deal work!" And I love to meet other people who are in this space doing similar work to me, because it really inspires me and helps me feel like I can keep doing this. I'm not alone. We're doing this together. Paul has worked at the New York City Department of Education for over 20 years. So he worked for years on equity initiatives and training educators and administrators in implicit bias and culturally-responsive education. And now he has his own equity consulting firm called Leading With Hearts and Minds. So he travels all over teaching teachers and administrators how to be anti-bias and anti-racist in their classrooms. And he focuses specifically on implicit bias, targeting the implicit bias within ourselves, and figuring out how we can transform those biases so that we can really be anti-racist together.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 07:25

I know. They're amazing. I was a little intimidated when I got on the Zoom call to record with them because I'm like, "Y'all have done some things." I mean, education for over two decades, Emmy award-winning journalist like, you know, this is going to be such a good conversation. Last thing, and then I promise I will let you hear from Paul and Stacey. Tonight, we have a live Q&A going on over on Patreon. So Patreon is our membership community. If you want to support first name basis and the podcast, you can head over to [patreon.com/firstnamebasis](https://patreon.com/firstnamebasis). I'll leave the link in the show notes. And all you have to do is sign up to be a member and you contribute to supporting First Name Basis financially, and then you get tons of awesome perks. And one of them is that we do live Q&As and Policy Parties, which are opportunities to get together virtually and talk about what's going on in our lives in terms of anti-racism with our kiddos or our students. It's really one of my favorite things that we get to do here at First Name Basis. So we have a Q&A tonight, and it is at 5:30 Pacific Time, 8:30 Eastern. So head over to Patreon so that you can come to our Q&A and ask any questions or leave a question in the comments, because it gets really exciting. And if you're hearing this after the fact, don't worry, because we have either a Q&A or a Policy Party every single month, so you won't be left out, and we record them all so you can get on and see all the old ones.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 08:52

Okay, y'all. Enough is enough. Y'all want to hear from Stacey and Paul, and I want that for you too. So here they are. All right. Hi, Stacy. Hi, Paul. Welcome to First Name Basis.

S

Stacey DeWitt 09:01

Thank you. It's great to be here, Jasmine.

P

Paul Forbes 09:03

Great to be here, Jasmine. Thanks so much.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 09:06

So I was telling you a little bit before I hit record that this documentary was so moving to me like, just all the things. I was in tears and my listeners know that, you know, that's not like a super huge surprise. But especially watching the students and the parents and everybody from the community being able to share their stories so openly was really powerful. And I'm wondering, Stacey, like, what was that lightning bolt moment for you when you were like, "We have to make this film.:"

S

Stacey DeWitt 09:39

You know, Jasmine, actually, it was not a lightning bolt moment. I think that came later. Paul and I met each other when he hired our company to do some work. That was a transformative process for me, in that I was seeing kids in schools for the first time that have, I've never seen in the news, and I come out of news. I come out of a media background. And so as a journalist, I just started saying to Paul, "Oh my gosh, why don't why doesn't the nation know the stories? Why don't we know the stories of these children?" And through that process, Paul and I became very good friends and started to talk about producing a documentary to tell the stories. Because the documentary is an independent documentary, we went through fits and starts, like many independent documentaries do. We had to stop and start, COVID hit, then George Floyd, the murder of George Floyd came along, and the country really started to wake up to be more aware of what was going on. And I think the documentary at that point took on a life of its own. And while we, you know, struggled through it, like independent films do, we were just became very passionate and very committed to tell a story that really was changing the narrative about students of color in this country.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 11:09

When you said that, you said you were thinking, "Why doesn't the nation know these stories?" It made me It reminded me of Dr. King and the way that he knew that the stories and the images, and the children involved in the Civil Rights movement needed to be on TV for people to see in their on their like, into their living rooms, right. And so I see that as part of the power of this film is something like that, like this is our modern Civil Rights Movement. And it's the same strategy that you were using.



... ..

S

Stacey DeWitt 11:40

Well that part, I think, Jasmine is really true. John Dovidio, who's in the film, the soundbite is not in the film, but we have lots of conversation, he does talk about civil rights and talk about how our moral code changed. What he also says, and some of the work that's on our website and short sound bites, is in civil rights, what King knew, he was called one of the best television producers of all time, because he knew cameras needed to be rolling. Right? And so he, he literally changed with those cameras rolling how we feel, and what our moral code was. And Dovidio says that in the film. And so I think that, right, our company is focused on the power of media, and the promise of education. And so that has been our sort of mission, the power of media promise of education to help people reach their highest good, since our inception. And the reality is, is that media can be used for good if we are educating audiences properly. And we're telling them the truth.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 12:47

Yeah. Well, I'm really grateful that you kept going with it, that's for sure. So one of the very first out of the gate, things that we learned from the documentary "and I'm sure a lot of people know this already, but I'm grateful that you brought it to the front of people's minds" is that race is the number one predictor of student success in our country. And one of the things that I get asked often in the work that I do from parents is, "I understand kind of that racism is systemic, but it's hard for me to explain it to other people. Like I don't really have examples." And I feel like that stat right there is proof that racism is a systemic issue. So I'm wondering, Paul, how do we like what are the factors that are contributing to systemic racism in the education system?

P

Paul Forbes 13:37

Yeah, so you know, I appreciate that question. And as you said, it's nuanced. You have to be willing to take an increased stance to learn about right historical perspective is important. And so when I when I think about when people talk about, "What do you mean it's systemic? What does that look like? What does that sound like? Think about low expectations, right? When you have low expectations, it manifests in many ways, it's going to manifest into under-representation in areas for Black and Brown people. It's going to represent, manifest in over representation. So if we talk about negative things, right, we say, "Oh, special education." That's negative? Over representation for Black and Brown students. You think about where opportunities where you want to say, "Oh it's positive," like honors, or AP courses. We have an under-representation, right. So what I know is that it manifests in the waves of people's, in their mind's eye, from many of years of associations that you're less than and you're not able to, before saying we won't even offer you the courses, right? We know the research that says if you want to be college and career ready, if you need to enter, persist and succeed in college, you need to, by your senior year, either be in precalculus, or trigonometry. Well, we know the research tells us that if I had a child, I would send her/him/them to a school that didn't have kids that look like me or look like them. Because we know that the schools where they have more white students, they have the gatekeeping courses like calculus, like precalc, like trigonometry, which means I'll have a better chance for success in the future. Where we have high number of students that look like me, where I could send my child, we know the research says two and a half times less chance that they'll be having the gatekeeping courses that we say is necessary to be college and career ready. And so I think about that, I think about how

that's baked in, because that becomes a trajectory for success. We talk about the school to prison pipeline, that's not just about suspensions. That's about am I get into classes? Am I allowed to take AP courses? Even if I don't do well on the test, do the research. Just being exposed to an AP setting just positions me to be successful. I know how things are being affected and continues on in perpetuity unless we disrupt and dismantle those structures.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 16:28

Yes. Okay. Yes. So many things while you were talking about one memory that popped into my mind immediately when you were talking about the SAT. So as I mentioned, I used to be a teacher. And there was something that happened that I was like, "This is so wrong, and I don't even know who to talk to to fix this." I was giving my kids like a standardized test. And there was a question where they had to write a story about going on the plane to visit your grandmother. Well, raise your hand if you ever been on a plane and you're in and under resourced community! No, none of these kids had ever ridden on a plane. And this was like going to determine, you know, what was going to happen to them in third grade. And I knew that third grade, the third grade leading reading levels, and the third grade math scores are what they use to determine how many prison beds they need in the prison system in Arizona. And so I was like, well, across the nation, I'm sure they use those same statistics. And I was just like, I can see the direct correlation between something that's happening so small " that seems small " in my classroom. One day for 30 minutes, in having to write this story that they know nothing about, have no background knowledge, have nothing to draw from, and what another person who has so much power in our community is deciding about them for their future. Right. And so when you were talking about the the SATs and the school to prison pipeline, I'm like I saw that connection firsthand.

P Paul Forbes 17:57

Ya, no, it's powerful, and it's deep. And it's important that again, we're intentional about speaking about this. But I also know, it's important that there's...there's ignorance. And again, I'm sure we'll talk about what we think about what's going on in the country today. But that ignorance manifests in ways in which you say things like, "Did you even know? Right? Did you even know?" And if you don't know, at least, let's have the conversation that you become aware, and you become versed in that, because then we can have that conversation that continues on from there. But there's some powerful and troubling information that we can unpack from the history of this country of what it founded. There's hope. But we also have to acknowledge where we've come from to know where we want to be go and where we'll be.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 18:48

Yeah. Wow. So Stacey, I was reading about the purposes behind "Defining Us." And one of the things that stuck out to me was it said, "To put a face on the educators and students who are creating an impact and living through the fallout of a country that is struggling with change." And the reason why it stuck out to me is because when I was trying to decide what to name First Name Basis, one of the titles that I like was toying around with was, "Put a Face On It," which sounds so clunky, and that's, you know, I didn't go with it. But it was just because there's research behind the idea that if you know someone from that community, it's so much harder

to harbor bias and, and when you know these stories, and when you connect with people on a human level. And I noticed when I was reading about you and your work as a reporter, I just was wondering if you can tell us like, what is the power of stories? What do you see as that power? Because I think that that's something that numbers and data can't necessarily show us is the story of the people behind it.

S

Stacey DeWitt 19:51

You know, I think that's such a great question, Jasmine. I think that's the crux of the whole documentary and if you get nothing else from the documentary except what starts to happen to you, inside you, when you actually form real relationships with people, and real relationships with people that have very different experiences than you do. When we can honor that with each other, our lives become better, and our lives become much richer. And we create a country that we all love and want to lift up and make better, you know. We, we create progress and change and an ability to come into relationship with each other that we've not had in this country in the past. And the reason stories, and particularly media and film, I think is so important is because we live in a really crowded world. And we can't, we don't have the time, the bandwidth, the you know, mentally, emotionally, to connect deeply with everybody. We've got, you know, limited lives and things that we need to focus on and take care of our law in our lives. But when I can see somebody's story in a real way, in a film, it allows me to emotionally connect, and see myself in them. And I think that's the power of the stories here, we didn't do anything really special. And we didn't set out with an agenda. We told the story. So many people have come up to us and said, "Wow, you really told my story." And, you know, and what I think and I think that was because it was organic. Story and film allows you to emotionally connect. That is more likely to produce a positive behavior change with anybody, with you and your husband, with you and your child, with you and a teacher...if I can emotionally connect to what you're telling me, and it resonates in me, it changes me. And I think Paul's whole life has been about that work and about the work of changing hearts. And King, you mentioned, you know, he said, legislate, we can pass laws, and we got to pass laws, right. But it will ultimately be changing hearts and minds that will create transformative change in this country. And I think we're at a moment now to do that. We are at a moment now to do that. The internet is our friend, and our enemy. Because if we use it appropriately, and if we use film, and movies and entertainment in ways that allow us to get the real stories of real people versus perpetuating a single narrative, it opens us way up.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 22:43

So one of the people that you featured was Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, and she's an associate professor at Columbia. And one of the things that she was saying is, race has been "I mean, we all know race is a social construct that was created to justify the bad things that Europeans were already doing to people of color" and so they use that as the foundation for everything that they were creating in the country. And so, Dr. Sealey-Ruiz was saying it's just so unrealistic to think that we're not going to talk about race in the classroom when we're talking about history, but then other things too. And she said, so okay, if we just accept that it's unrealistic to think that we're not going to talk about it, so we need to focus on having constructive conversations. Paul, I'm wondering, what does that look like between a teacher and their students? What does a constructive conversation about race actually look like within the walls of a classroom?

P

Paul Forbes 23:37

We need to be having constructive conversations about creating, molding, nurturing, critically-conscious young people. There's another scholar that Dr. Yolanda and I and many who are in this work, reference as the OG of cultural responsive pedagogy, and that's Gloria Ladson-Billings. Right. And Gloria Ladson-Billings talks about teaching and what good teaching looks like. And she's talks about three pillars. And one she says yes, academics, right, it's important that we focus on student learning. The other second pillar is cultural competence, right? So cultural competence, just about our young people being allowed to bring their authentic selves into the classroom, and be able to, not just for themselves, but also to learn about at least one other culture or other folks, right? To understand that that symbiotic relationship of saying "Yes, I am confident, I am comfortable, and I'm affirmed, but also I need to affirm others and learn about others," right? So yes, academics is important, how you're learning, your moral learning, be able to say this is right and this is wrong, going through two cultural competences that I am affirming for whom I who I am. And I could bring my authentic self into this space. And the third one is this idea of critical consciousness, this idea that I am able to now take what I've been learning and be able to look at society. 'Cause we always say, I love when people say, "We are trying to create a better tomorrow," right? We will say, "Oh, I want tomorrow, the world ahead for my child. Like I don't have any kids of my own, but I know part of the work that I've been doing is to ensure that the world that I leave, that's part of the debt that I'm paying, right, I had an opportunity to get. And part of as, as Muhammad Ali said, the rent that that I pay for my life is to be able to give to others and make sure I leave a better tomorrow. I want to make sure the next generation is better off because of what they learned. And so being critically conscious should be a part of good pedagogy and good teaching. Because our young people will say, let's look at what we've done, what has occurred, so we can be better for the future. And so Gloria Ladson-Billings doesn't see it as a, either/or but a both/and. It's important that we incorporate, yes, academics is important. Students have to learn, and you'll hear Dr. Young speak about this in the documentary where he says like, you know, I'm not saying you absolve yourself and take responsibility, you still have to learn and be able to compete with your academics. And there's more to this. So when I say talk about race, I think it's important that we're speaking about race, and and the intersectionalities that we have that's existing. It could be about sexual orientation. It could be about health care, whatever it is any topic that we can have a look at and saying, "You know what? This doesn't feel right. It doesn't look right. Something's off here." As I said earlier, it's so baked into the fabric of this country. If we're not able to have conversations about inequities, if we can't have conversations about the mistakes of the past, then how will we create a better tomorrow? We know what that what the whole idiom about, if we don't remember our past, we're doomed to repeat it. Right? We know what's going to happen. And so, again, hearing the stories, as Stacy said earlier, what happens is you start saying, "Yeah, I can relate to that." And again, what I try to do is, I try to pull it back a bit, right? Yes, we're gonna talk. I agree with Dr. Yolanda, and I will have no problems having those conversation and will. But I pull it back and say, the conversation not to fixate in the sense that you say go right here and get narrow. I say, let's pull it back and say, "Let's be critically conscious educators that are helping to teach critically conscious little..." I'm just gonna share this quickly. I was in a school a couple of years ago, elementary school, you mentioned that you were a teacher. Do you mind? What what grade level Ddd you teach?

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 23:38

Second.



P

Paul Forbes 23:40

Second grade, okay. So I was in the school, kindergarten through three, I was looking specifically at what was doing it with a school, where they said, "We want to, at a very early age, have critically conscious little ones." And so they would go to the playground, they were in a neighborhood that bordered a have and a have-not neighborhood in Brooklyn. What they would do with their little ones is go to a playground. And they would have the young people, the little ones, go in, and they would go to a place where there were all kinds of slides and all kinds of refurbished playgrounds and everything. And then they would take them like a block over, they would walk over and go to another playground that didn't have. And they watched and saw how the little ones asked, "Why aren't the monkey bars here? Why aren't the slide...why is that broken?" Question, interrogative thinking, right about this? Like, aha, you know, something's not right. You know, there's something inherently not fair, right. So that is not indoctrinating. But again, the education process begins when you start saying, this is more than simply learning our ABCs and one, two threes. It's about seeing the world and saying something's different. I mean, we could continue on for next hour and talk about what the conversation is specifically, talking about race. But I want to pull back for those who are listening saying, "Okay, now I'm beginning to process and understand." This is more than just simply saying, "let's talk about race." We're talking about being critically conscious, so I can interrogate the inequities that I see in the world, in my community, and having a toolkit and ability and skill sets that can help me have those conversations to go forward for a better tomorrow.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 30:02

Yes, yes, exactly. And the story about the kids on the playground. I mean, that is the crux of it for kids. They understand fairness, like, you cannot get anything past these kids, right? And that's what these -isms are. Racism is unfairness. And so when we're talking to little kids, and we're helping them see like, "hey, wait a minute, that's not fair." How can you be part of making that more fair.

S

Stacey DeWitt 30:27

You know, Jasmine, I just want to say that is such a profound statement that children understand fairness, because, again, John Dovidios who's in the documentary out of Yale does a lot of bias work, in concert, you know, sort of similar bias work that Paul does, and he does a lot of research around it. One of the things he says, again, we had to cut so much to just get the stories down. But he says, you know, it's been shown that the one value that everybody gets, and that rises above is fairness. We get fairness. If we can show people that something is unfair, and it's amazing to me that you just said, little children, second graders, they know it intuitively. It's instinctual for them, right. And they will call it immediately. Right. And so that value of fairness, when we can bring that to the table, and really show it to you, rather than say why it should or shouldn't be, but just show it in action. Right? There's a lot of people who have come up to me after the documentary, especially white people who have a position of privilege

and influence in society, and have said, "This shouldn't be happening. This should not be happening." Right? I mean, it's clear. It's unfair. And so that, that is where I think it really boils down for people.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 32:00

Wow, yes. And one of the things I try to tell people is, the reason why you're so uncomfortable with your privilege is because you love fairness. It's because we all want things to be fair. So when you, when you recognize that you have this privilege, you're like, "This feels gross. I don't like this," right. But a lot of people don't have the tools to know what to do next. So I think that really, when we see these parents who are fighting against having these critical consciousness conversations in the classroom, it's because...it's hard. It's hard, because I mean, it's giving them a lot of grace, right, to say, like, "You love fairness so much that you're doing this horrible thing," right, but we see them fighting tooth and nail to keep these conversations out of the classroom. What do you wish you could say to them?

**S** Stacey DeWitt 32:45

Well, I think what's really important about what you just said, Jasmine, if you notice in the second set, we break up the documentary, sort of in chapters, as you'll remember. And in the second chapter, it comes up and it says, "The Pain: How Do We Feel?" That was intentional. Because George Patterson and David Kirkland, and those folks in the documentary talk about the pain that students feel that are in these unfair situations. But there's a second meaning there. And the second meaning is, is that if you're honest with yourself, and you are in a position of privilege, and you know, you are, that doesn't feel good, either. And we don't want to look at that. We don't want to, we want to be distracted from that. We want to say it's not so because I think you're right. And I think it's profound that you actually saw that and said it in that way. That's what we are...there's two meanings there. Right? This does not feel right to anyone, if you're willing to have an honest conversation about it. Right. And that, I think you're right, I think you have hit, you have got it spot on. I think we don't want to discuss it and if somebody will give us permission not to, if somebody will say to us, you know what, we're post-racial, you don't need to discuss that, it lets us off the hook. We're talking about identity. We're talking about humanity. We're talking about who we are as individuals. You can't stop conversations about that.

**P** Paul Forbes 34:27

Yeah. Just to add to what Stacey said, you know, I see what's happening. And go back to what we started earlier saying I think what happened is, you know, using a playbook from the Civil Rights Movement, John Lewis on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and those cameras rolling, Mahatma Gandhi and those salt plants and Indian people seeing them getting beat as they walked in the whole non-violence movement Dr. King sayin, really struggling because you know, Dr. King, many people said, "We should not use the children." And Dr. King was really struggling because he worried, right? But he said it's important. They need to see that. Like, if you could do this to the children, right, this idea of how are the children? If we could do it to the children, then would that everyone's gonna be like, "I can relate to that." Right? I have my own child. I know children, I have cousins, I have nieces. How can you have dogs and hoses and

stuff. And so they saw it. And we had multiple facets come together, where you have a pandemic that's global, you have society shut down, people had to sit and watch I, you know, I say, George Floyd, when that happens and he's murdered in May of 2020. You look at and say, "Wait a minute, I couldn't look away." It was on every station was on constantly, all of this is going on, and people couldn't run. They no longer could say, "I didn't know about this, I hadn't heard." You had to sit and watch it and go through, as you've just mentioned, about pain on both levels, right? Whether it was being done to you, you know, whether you say, "Oh my gosh, how can that happen to any human being?" And so I think the, there's always, and again, go through history, there's always a backlash, whenever you start seeing some progress being made, especially when it comes to Black people or marginalized people. There's always a backlash, right? And so, when I'm hearing about these folks who are, "We don't want to have these conversations. We want to take control of what our children are learning in schools and this and what they do in the public education," and saying, "No, we're going to, we want to control that." You mentioned about extending grace and care. And I do. I extend and as a Black man, that takes a lot, right. It's a tax that I have that even while there's oppressive situations, structures, systems, I also all the time must be the one to speak about it and be in a space where I got to talk about how that's happening, how it's feeling for me, right. And so I extend the care and the grace. And I say, "Many folks are just ignorant," right? Etymologically ignorant is just not knowing, right? And I'm okay with that. Because we all are ignorant about many things. Where I'm going to hold you responsible is if you want to be willingly ignorant, and you choose not to right. It's called confirmation bias. I know that neuroscience and understand that, right. It confirmed what you believe you already know. And you'll see what you what you want to see, and you won't see what you aren't looking for. Right? I do want to say, be educated, do your due diligence, and just get to know. We were in a film festival with the US premiere out in LA. And I remember we had a panel discussion and a film director was in the panel, not on the panel, but he was sitting in the audience. And he came to me afterwards and he said, he admitted, he said, "I gotta tell you, I'm conservative, I supported Trump. And I'm trying to understand something I don't understand. And so I appreciate the approach that you had on the panel. And so help me understand what this whole thing is about CRT. Because I don't get it. My friends. Talk to me about it." And I said, I went through and explained in the two minutes we have standing here I won't cover everything, but I need you to understand. And he said to me, he said, "I really don't get it. Yes, identify as a conservative, and but I don't understand what it is." I gave him some information and he was so grateful. Right? And my thing is, he was saying, "what I've heard and what I've been told," like a talking point, just wasn't meshing for him, but he knew he received the talking points. And now he heard it he's like, "Yeah, that would, it make sense that you would want to have the conversation about being credibly conscious about this that? Don't we want that for all our children? Isn't that what we want?" And so it was interesting, and I saw the wheels turning and the aha moments going on. But he came into that space with all that he had and all he knew. And he stayed there and he continued to move even though he didn't feel comfortable. It was like he was pushing back to say, "No, this is wrong. I'm not going there." I really am not spending time trying to debunk, right, try to prove a negative. You can't " I mean, that's time not well used. I'm spending my time saying, "Understand neuroscience understand associations, and how we move through life and how that then could lead to inequitable policies and procedures and behaviors. And if you believe in fairness," right, if this is part of your evening, then you start saying, "This doesn't feel right. It can't be okay. I got to question this," and so I think that's important and that's the kind of the attitude I'm taking as I listen. I would just say to parents, define your terms and take an inquiry stance and learn. what really literally is what I would say. And what I would just say, I don't want to get into an argument back and forth, that's not going to be the thing that's gonna get, my thing is "Come let us reason together." If we're willing to do that, then we could have a pathway forward.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 40:12

One of the most poignant parts of the film for me, Paul was when you were talking about the murder of George Floyd, you mentioned him a little while ago, and there was this moment where you said, you were just thinking, what difference are we really making in this work? And I was really grateful for your vulnerability, because as someone who also does this work, I feel that and I think about that, and I'm wondering, where do you find hope to keep going,

P

Paul Forbes 40:39

you know, every time I watch that, I go back to the moment when I was, I was actually doing, we were in COVID, a few months into COVID, at that point, and we had gone to remote learning. And so I was doing a virtual session. Actually, my session ended, I had my team, and I came to support a colleague, who was also doing an implicit bias awareness workshop in a virtual space. And so I was there supporting. And again, I'm in the Twitterverse, @paulforbesNYC, on Twitter, and I clicked my Twitter, I was gonna tweet out about the session that we were doing. And I saw something trending. And I said, "Oh, let me just check this." And I clicked it. And I would say, I regret that I had done it at that moment, because I remember the tsunami of emotions that flooded me at that moment. I was like, "Wait, what?" and I hadn't seen the whole thing. But I saw the information about the general sense, right, this had happened and, and I was like what, so again, I had a lot of things in me. It's not until the session ended, I had time to take a break, to come out to my living room for my den, to watch and see, and I saw the video. I gotta tell you, I, I went to a dark place, a dark place to the extent that I was just like, "What is what, why how..." I had so many questions, as I watched this, and it was on repeat, right? All the news, they would, this was just...and I look at George Floyd. I'm a big guy, you know, 6'5", 320. And I remember sitting and just thinking, as I say, in the documentary, "Why am I doing this? Why am I doing this work? If what difference is being made? If this could happen so callously." I mean, just the idea of seeing someone, particularly law enforcement officer, put the hand in their pocket and just sit there, kneel on that neck, as you're hearing someone agonizing, and screaming, people around saying, "Don't do check it," like all kinds of things. As I'm saying, "This is just..." It blew my mind. And I know it still affects, I've seen young people, I've seen other people watching when that clip comes up, they still can't look at it, right. And what was I think what also took a toll for me was soon after, I got a lot of phone calls, texts, emails, from administrators in New York City, and other spaces that I would work with and stuff. And they want to know if I could come and speak to their students, speak to their staff, speak to their parents and guardians and caregivers. I said earlier about the tax as a Black man, in particular, who's doing this work, that not only do we have to take in and see something like that, but now I'm being asked to come in and speak about it, right? And be able to help others process. Now, again, I have a spirit of giving, and a spirit of love. So that's my natural disposition, right? I get that, I do the work. I love this work and everything I do is the reason why. But that period of time was very difficult. And I did many sessions, I did many town halls, I did many workshops, and I did the history of that people would say... I did one workshop, "I was saying, how did we get here? It was where do we go from here? Right?" Or even if I do when people who say, "This is not who we are"

P

Paul Forbes 44:34

Oh my gosh. Miss me with that. Miss me with that.

P

Paul Forbes 44:37

And I'm like, "Folks. No no no. This is who we are." That's the point, right? This is and that is part of my thing about the learning. No, no, this is who we are. The question is, who do we want to be? And if we ask that question and they said, "What will we do to be who we want to be?" Right? But don't tell me this is not who we are. We have been a country that has done this and the enslavement of one group and the genocide of another group and we have not had a truth and reconciliation. But what has kept me going and I say it in documentary was the largest movement that we've seen in this country was during the pandemic, after George Floyd. Now we know the numbers. And if people will try to discredit it and say it's Black Lives Matter and speak about this, and why we have that, and they were destructive, and they burnt down this. And, again, I know why people need to say that to justify things. to absolve themselves and assuage themselves with what they know has been a reason, as Dr. King, as we mentioned, has said, "A riot is the voice of the voiceless." There's a reason why we can't speak about. Yes, I don't agree we should not burn and we should not loot and all that. But we need to understand if we're being critically conscious, what gets someone to a point that they feel like the only way you will hear me, it's for me to do this, right. And so I decided that I was going to just stop and think this doesn't make sense. And I thought about my colleague, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, I spoke just about all the folks that I've worked with for 20 plus years. But then I also thought about those stories. And Mwabe, and Angel, Darion, Shakirah. I thought about the so many of the young people, especially young men for the years that I was doing as driving across the country with some doing college visits, that they were willing to go to the streets and say, "We want to have a better tomorrow, because we are learning to be more critically conscious, cause we are learning that this cannot be right. And we have to be the ones to stand up." And as I said, I'm going to continue in that space because of our young people. But I know part of my calling and my ministry, I do believe is this work. And it's about speaking on this and going into spaces, where again, I go to places where there's some crowds, and I could feel the energy of what is he going to do look at this guy. And I know again, I'm the only person, yes, the only Black person in this space. And that in itself doesn't bother. I'm like, "Okay, you do what you want to do with that." But I'm going to say what needs to be said, I'm gonna do it with love, and humor. And that's part of the calling. And so it was important for me, even and I still have those reactions. Again, like I said, when I see so many more, since George Floyd, I still say, it happened again, I'm like, really, they just killed that young man as he gets in his car, and you fired the gun instead of the Taser. Like you didn't like all these things still play out, right constantly. And I keep thinking, I travel all over the country. And you know what? That could be me. I don't know when I'll be stopped by police. But who knows, right? But I'm gonna keep doing that work. And I credit, the credit to my faith. And it's a credit to the young people, the families that I have met, who I know, I believe when they say, "If you had not done this, if you have not exposed our child children, if you had not given that opportunity to access, I don't know where we would be." I think about that. I know that role. And I will continue doing that as long as I have health strength and breath. But I'm not going to dismiss the tax, in ways in which it takes a toll on especially people of color who are doing this work. So for you, I will say Jasmine, thank you for what you're doing. And hang in there. I know it's hard. I know it can be difficult at times, you might feel like, "Am I the only one doing this?" but know that there are many more. And we're out there we're supporting. And we're doing the work as well. So that's kept me going. It'll keep you going. You're that next generation. And so again, know that I'm there for you as well to support you and lift you up as you're doing this work.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 49:05

Thank you. I really, I told my husband if this wasn't a calling, I would have quit a long time ago.

P Paul Forbes 49:10

Amen. Amen.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 49:12

So Well, thank you, Paul, so much. I am so grateful for the work you do. But I'm just grateful for you as a human outside of the work you do, because I don't think you would be able to bring so much compassion and love to this work if you didn't have, you know, the heart and the spirit outside of you know, talking about race. I think about when Dr. King was like "I want to just talk to you as a reverend," and I hope that you have like places in your life where you get to go and just, you know, be someone who doesn't talk about race.

P Paul Forbes 49:41

I appreciate that. And just so you know, so I did start my own company Leading With Hearts and Minds. [www.leadingwithheartsandminds.com](http://www.leadingwithheartsandminds.com). And you'll hear, you can see more about my story and the work that I do. I am focused, again, I can have all kinds of conversations and do different workshops. But I am intentional about the foundational workshop, and a foundational discussion about implicit bias. And really understanding how we even get to places. I believe that if we can have that conversation, we can segue in an authentic, intellectual way. It segues into these other conversations that people call difficult conversations. I'm not sure how difficult they are, I think the conversation, I think people want to put an adjective on there with that. But so my focus is on unpacking and understanding implicit bias in a fun way and interactive, engaging, weighing, but in a way that you'll walk away and not as a workshop, not as a training, you will not be saved, you won't be cured, you won't be sanctified or healed at the end of it. But you'll be more aware.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 50:58

So Stacy, I'm thinking about someone who has seen, you know, maybe some marketing for or come across "Defining Us." I'm wondering, they're trying to think about whether or not they should press play, what would you tell them about the film?

S Stacey DeWitt 51:14

I would say that you need to hear a new voice. And you need to see a new story. I think it's very important in this country, and particularly right now that we are all open to doing exactly what Paul was just talking about. And that is, we have to be willing to listen to something we haven't heard before. And what's happening right now, is that we are hearing one narrative,

there's a war going on in our nation schools, that is impacting our children. And the very people who are most impacted by that. We're not hearing from the educators on the ground, the educators who are exhausted, who get up every day and go to school, and they love their children. I don't know, any educators that I deal with on a day to day basis, who have not committed their lives to this. And to teaching these kids and helping them grow. It's why they're in it's why they stay in. It's exhausting. We demand so much of them. They're our national heroes, we need to hear from them. They are the reason voice when Paul say, "Come let us reason together," educators can show us how that's the number one thing, I would say the number two thing or parallel with that, I would say you have to see the stories of the students. It is not something that you hear on a regular basis. It's not something that media lifts up, or that the news lifts up, if you're watching major national news, it's just not how news works. People don't run around and lead in the Nightly News with what's positive happening in America. It's just not the ethos, as Paul likes to say, it's not how the system works, right. And I say that lovingly, I come out of news as a reporter and a journalist. And I think journalism is a very, very valuable profession and an honorable profession. But it's not how the business of news works. And so we have to be able to hear their stories. And then the third thing I would say is, sit down, take a breath. And take an hour and a half, to let yourself wrap your head around something that is more in depth than a three second soundbite. Yeah, or a minute and a half soundbite or a minute and a half story that may, in some worlds not all worlds, but in some worlds actually be designed to reinforce beliefs that you already have, and to trigger the fears and beliefs that you already have. And that is being delivered up to you through an algorithm because that's what you watch and read on the internet. So let's all get just a little bit more critically conscious, and have a critical lens with media. And just take one hour and a half to sit down and watch for those three reasons. And then see what you think. And if you are interested and curious and emerged you pass it along to defining us is now being distributed by Gravititas Ventures. It is on all national and international TV, VOD " Video on Demand platforms. You can get it on Amazon Prime, iTunes, Apple TV, a whole list if you go to the definingus.org website, right there on the homepage, it says download the film. And you can link directly to any of the platforms that you use and see the film.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 55:12

I mean, I told you you're gonna want to go watch this documentary I told you, I told you and you have to. It's so good. "Defining Us: Children at the Crossroads of Change." If you just go to their website, which I will link in the show notes, you can see anywhere where you can stream the documentary, I'm pretty sure it's on Amazon Prime. But wow, it's I mean, grab your tissues and get your notepad ready so that you can write down all of the inspirational things that you get from it. And all the ways that you want to take action after watching it because, man, oh, man, I felt so revived. Like, is that the right word? It was just renewed my spirit for anti-racism watching these children who are at the crossroads of change. I mean, I didn't mean to do that. But seriously, they are. It's amazing. I'm so grateful to Stacey and Paul for taking the time, and for teaching us so much. And they have been working on this project forever. So for us to finally be able to sit down on our couches and press play. It's an amazing, amazing miracle. So go watch "Defining Us." Head over to my Instagram [firstname.basis](#). Tell us what you thought of the documentary and all the kiddos who are highlighted in the documentary. Like get ready to be inspired. All right, I love you. I'll talk to you soon.

**J** Jasmine Bradshaw 56:29

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 @firstname.basis. If you're interested in partnering with First Nare 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.