

8.8 Resisting White Supremacy Culture and Finding Joy

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

talk, urgency, characteristics, white supremacy, book, people, fiction, work, life, thinking, love, read, waste, perfectionism, racism, share, feel, oaken, excellence, movies

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You're listening to the First Name Basis Podcast, Season Eight, Episode Eight, "My Journey: Resisting White Supremacy Culture and Finding Joy."

Welcome to the First Name Basis podcast an anti-racist podcast for schools and families. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and it's my job to teach grownups like you how to talk to kids about race and racism. So let's go! We've got work to do.

Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. And if you're listening to this, on the day that it comes out, it's almost my birthday. It's almost my birthday! I'm turning 30, which I can't believe. It feels very weird. But for this episode, I decided since I'm turning 30, I'm going to share 30 things that I've learned about anti-racism. Just kidding, that would take way too long. We would literally be here forever. I'm totally kidding. I'm not sharing 30 things about anti-racism. I just thought that would be hilarious because we would be here forever. No, I am going to share a little bit about my journey with anti-racism and talk about white supremacy culture and where I've seen it show up in my life. And a really, really small change that I've made that has made a huge difference in my life and in my mental health. And so stick around for that. Don't worry, I'm not sharing 30 things I've learned. I have shared 30 things I've learned over the past, you know, four years of doing this podcast, but not today.

The other thing I wanted to say is since it's my birthday, I was wondering if you could leave me a podcast review. They are so helpful in helping other people find First Name Basis and helping people press play. I know that when I go to find a new podcast, I always skim through the reviews and see what people have to say before I decide to listen to an episode. So will you please please please leave a podcast review for First Name Basis anywhere you're listening, any app you're listening on — Spotify or Apple podcasts — you can leave a rating and a review. And that would be the best birthday present ever. So thank you in advance.

So I really never thought I would feel this way. But turning 30 has really messed with my head. Like, I just feel like I have been having one existential crisis after another. And if you are my close friend, thank you. Thank you for watching my Marco Polos and reading my super long texts, like, I don't know. I really never thought that this would happen. But all I can think of is that episode of Friends. I think it's Rachel, I don't know, I watched it — I used to watch Friends when it was premiering. And I was like eight years old. And I remember Rachel turning 30. And it was like such a big deal. And she was like, "I'm ancient." And I remember thinking, "Oh, yeah, you are." And now I'm turning 30. And I'm not ancient! And it's okay if I am, but I'm not! And I just was like, "What is with my head?"

But anyway, because of all of that I've been reflecting a lot. And one of the things I thought that it would be cool to share with you is just my reflection on how white supremacy culture has affected me in certain ways in my life and kind of what I'm doing to combat that. I have said so many times that anti-racism is a journey and not a destination. And so I want to share a piece of my journey with you. And I hope it's okay. I mean, I'm not like showing the seedy underbelly of myself, which I don't, I don't really have that. But anyway — and neither do you, you're a good person — but I just want to share the real ways that white supremacy culture shows up in my life and how I am a perfectionist basically. I'll talk about it in a second. But I am pretty hard on myself, as I know so many of you are out there listening, and so I hope that sharing this might help you be able to release a little bit of that. We'll see.

Y'all I've got to tell you about this activity book that we made for all the little allies in your life. So it's basically a coloring book, but everything is based around allyship and anti-racism. So we've got word searches, dot-to-dots, color by number, crossword puzzles — it's so cool. And everything is based around anti-racism. So the word search isn't just a word search, it's an anti-racist word search and the dot-to-dot is making the Black Power Fist, and the color by number of features anti-racist heroes like Richard and Mildred Loving, and there's an eye spy where you can spy all the different things that you would find at a protest. Like so cool, right? So if you're going on a road trip, or your kiddos or your students in your summer school class are just hanging around and you need a little something for them to do, but you want it to be meaningful, go to firstnamebasis.org/store and you'll find our Little Allies Activity Book there. Check it out. Your little allies are going to love it. [Firstnamebasis.org/store](https://firstnamebasis.org/store), and I will leave that link in the show notes.

So let's start with the background of what even is white supremacy culture, and what are the characteristics and then we'll dive a little deeper, and I'll share some stuff from my life. So the characteristics of white supremacy culture was developed by a white woman named Tema Okun. She has been doing DEI work for more than 30 years. And she developed a list of 15 different characteristics. And she actually developed this list a long time ago in the early 1990s. And I was gonna say something about how that's when I was born, because I'm so young, but I don't need to talk about that. It's just 30, Jasmine, get over it.

Anyway, in the early 1990s, Tema Okun developed these 15 characteristics, and she talked about why she developed them, she was leading a DEI session with this organization. And she left feeling so frustrated, she felt like they weren't really making very much progress. And she felt like she could see very clearly what was hindering their progress. So she goes home after a really hard day at work, and she pens the 15 characteristics of white supremacy culture. And she says that she really didn't mean

for it to be this widespread thing. She talked on a podcast called Deconstructed, and I'll link it in the show notes. But in this episode, she talked about how she could see so clearly that these characteristics were hindering their progress and hindering their growth. And she wished that they had named them a little more clearly so that when they were coming up, she could just easily point them out to the group and say, "Hey, the comment that you made goes along with this characteristic," or "Something that you're feeling right now might be linked to that characteristic." And she talked about how it was a paper that she wrote a very long time ago, and then it kind of was lying dormant for a while. But it was really revived in 2020.

So in 2020, it began to be widely circulated. And she felt like people were taking her work out of context and misusing it. And she was just like, "Whoa, whoa!" Like a lot of people were using it in ways that she didn't feel it was intended to be used. And so what she did was she put together a website where she breaks down each of the characteristics in detail, so that people have a better understanding of each one, and what they look like and how they work together. And of course, I will link the website as well, so you can check it out for yourself. But on the website, she says that the information is actually enough to be a book, like she has written enough on there that they could put it together and it can be an entire book, but she really wanted it to be accessible and free to people. So that's why she put it in a website version instead of making it into a book. And on that podcast episode I was listening to she talks specifically about the purpose of the website. And she said that the purpose is to understand quote, "how racism and white supremacy operate, so that people in organizations and communities could have a shared language and a shared history and a shared understanding, a shared framework for thinking about how to tackle it." End quote. I feel like from that quote, we can see how much she really wants people to use the information to really get on the same page, so that we can uncover what's going on so that we can try to fix it right? Like we, when she says we're thinking about how to tackle it. It's meant to be used so that you can take action against racism and white supremacy. So what I'm going to do is share the full list of characteristics. And then I'm going to break down a couple of them and how I've seen them playing out in my life. I mean, like I said, at the beginning, I'm not sharing 30 things, we really would not have time to go through all 15 of these. But I do want to do a deep dive into a couple of them.

So the characteristics of white supremacy culture are: either or thinking; worship of the written word; objectivity; individualism; quantity over quality; power hoarding; fear of open conflict; sense of urgency; defensiveness; paternalism; progress is more and bigger; belief in one right way; right to comfort; and perfectionism. And while I was reading those, you probably heard a lot of the stuff that we've talked about on the podcast so many times. I feel like we've talked about power hoarding a ton. We've talked about individualism a ton, either or thinking...there's just...I have examples for each one of these. And so there is really so much to say, and I feel like maybe this could be a series. I hope to make future episodes about it. Because there really is so much to unpack in each one of them. And they are so pervasive in our culture. I feel like individualism...oh, my goodness. I mean, there's just so much to say about that.

I did a training with an organization called Embracing Equity, and it was awesome. I'll link it of course, and one of the facilitators made a really good point. He was talking about the characteristics, we were actually all talking about it as a cohort, we were discussing it. And he was saying the characteristics

aren't entirely bad. Like, sometimes a sense of urgency can be good, it can help you get things done and help you make progress. But he was explaining that when we put too much emphasis on these characteristics, or when they're all working together to maintain systems of oppression, that's when they're dangerous. And as I quoted Tema before, she was talking a lot about how these characteristics get in the way of us making progress towards social and racial justice. So it's not always, you know, white supremacy showing up just because you're trying to be urgent about something. But if it's getting in the way of making progress toward justice for everyone, then that is when we are seeing it feed into white supremacy culture. Does that make sense?

Another thing that I learned in that Embracing Equity class, and also was emphasized by Tema Okun, is that we need to be looking at these characteristics as a reflection tool. And so when we take time and sit down and think about, "Okay, are these things that I'm doing? Are they hurting other people? Are they hurting me? And are they perpetuating a system that I don't want to perpetuate?" That is the purpose of understanding and unpacking the characteristics of white supremacy culture. But I also want to remind you that accountability is a gift. So as much as Tema says that it's important that we don't use these as a weapon, it is okay to us to point out when other people are embracing the characteristics and when it's hurting each other, right? So if someone is sharing with you that you are exhibiting one of these characteristics and that it's not helping the case for social justice, then understand that that is a gift that they're giving you holding you accountable, and helping you live up to your values is always always always a gift, even if it makes us feel kind of uncomfortable, and sometimes sad.

So as I was using them as a reflection tool, when I was thinking about all the different things that I've been reflecting on and who I am and where I'm going, and what I'm doing with my life now that I'm turning 30, I was thinking about two characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in my life pretty much daily. And that is perfectionism, and the sense of urgency. Those two things, they just really got me. And sometimes they hurt me. And sometimes they hurt my relationships and it sucks. So I want to tell you a little bit more, like I'll define both of them. And then I'll tell you what they look like in my life.

Okay, I'm going to quote her website, because I could not say it better than she already has. But also, one of the things that she points out is that these characteristics are often working together. So it's kind of hard to talk about one without talking about other ones. And so she's kind of linked a bunch of them together, and describes them and helps you see how all of them are connected, and how that can make them even more harmful. And first, she talks about "one right way" along with perfectionism, paternalism, and objectivity. She says, quote, "This page explores our cultural belief that there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it. This belief is connected to the belief that the right way is the quote unquote, 'perfect way,' and therefore perfection is both attainable and desirable." End quote. And when I read that part about perfection, people thinking that perfection is both attainable and desirable. I was like, "Oh my gosh, is she inside my head?" Because as much as I want to pretend like I'm chill, I'm like, "No, this could be perfect, right? There is a way for something to be perfect. So let's just do it that way, since it can be perfect." But I really love how she invites us to interrogate that thought and maybe consider what else could be possible if we weren't always trying to make everything perfect.

On the page where she describes the characteristics, she also lists and outlines different ways that these characteristics can show up in your life, and so I wanted to share three from the list where I felt like she was talking to me, like she met me and then she wrote these about me. So for this first one, she wrote, quote, “Mistakes are seen as personal, ie they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are — mistakes.” End quote. She goes on to write a little bit more about perfectionism and says it is, quote, “Often internally felt, in other words, the perfectionist fails to appreciate their own good work, more often pointing out their faults or quote unquote ‘failures,’ focusing on inadequacies and mistakes rather than learning from them. The person works with a harsh and constant inner critic that has internalized the standard set by someone else.” End quote. I will admit here that my inner critic is pretty harsh. And I feel like I've heard that thing a lot of times where it's like, “Would you talk to your friends the way that you talk to yourself?” Of course not, because I wouldn't have very many friends if I did. But I think that that is part of the problem. And just being able to put words to what's going on is honestly so like, freeing and healing, because now I can look at it and try to figure out what I want to do about it.

The third one that I wanted to share, she says, quote, “It's linked to the characteristic of one right way, where the demand for perfection assumes that we know what perfection is, while others are doing it wrong or falling short.” End quote. And this one jumped out to me because she said it assumes that we know what perfection is where I was like, “Oh, wow.” Like, I don't know, just that thought of you might think that you're aiming towards perfection, but who says that it's perfect? Like wasn't that a song? Okay, I had to look it up. It's that Selena Gomez song. It's called “Who Says?” Here it is. So she's saying “Who says you're not perfect?” But what Tema Okun is saying is what even is perfect? And who gets to decide? It's, I guess it's kind of similar. They're kind of saying similar things. But Tema Okun is saying, “We don't need to be perfect” Like Selena Gomez is saying, “You are perfect. Who says you're not perfect?” And Tema Okun is like, “Why is that the goal?” Hmm. This is, a I mean, a tangent, honestly, a tangent, but a good one, right. Okay, a good thing to think about, like Selena Gomez and Tema Okun, they've got me thinking. So that is perfectionism, and how she defines the characteristic on her website, and then a few of the ways that it can show up.

And the other one that I mentioned that I feel like it's something that shows up in my life pretty much daily is sense of urgency. So on the sense of urgency page she writes, quote, “This page explores our cultural habit of applying a sense of urgency to our everyday lives in ways that perpetuate power imbalances, while disconnecting us from our need to breathe and pause and reflect. The irony is that this imposed sense of urgency serves to erase the actual urgency of tackling racial and social injustice.” End quote. So I don't know if that last part necessarily applies to me, because my whole entire job is tackling racial and social injustice. But I'm sure that I can get in my own way sometimes, because I'm trying to do things quickly. But for the most part, I feel like my urgency comes from urgently wanting to tackle this. So it's urgency inception, I guess. But you know what I'm saying, like, I am trying so hard to tackle something that is so important that sometimes I can miss things. And it could hurt the people around me. I mean, just a few weeks ago, I posted a reel that went along with one of our episodes. And then I realized after the fact that I needed to talk to a friend before I posted it, because she was in it. And I was like, “Oh my gosh, I really should have checked with her before doing this, this could have been harmful.” And I checked with her and she was fine. But it just made me feel like I need to slow the heck down. This sense of urgency could have hurt this relationship that's really important to me. So

Tema Okun lists different ways that urgency can show up, and I wanted to share four of them. I know last time I shared three, but I mean, they were just, these were also good. So she says the sense of urgency, quote, "Sacrifices and erases the potential of other modes of knowing and wisdom that require more time, embodied, intuitive, and spiritual." End quote. So she's talking about all these different types of wisdom, these different ways that we can know things that actually take a lot more time than trying to go so so quickly, all the time. Now, that instantly reminded me of this Tik Tok sound, and I promise this is not a pop culture podcast, even though it might seem like it's slowly turning into one it just reminded me of this, I have to play it for you because I feel like the first part is me and my sense of urgency. And the second part is other people and them tapping into deeper ways of knowing things and deeper wisdom that takes more time. Have you seen that on Tik Tok or floating around Instagram? Have you seen that? It's basically usually like one person in the relationship is like the one who's like calm all the time and the other person is spinning like a ballerina. But really I feel like it is good commentary on our culture and how sometimes we are pushing and missing out on good things, because we are just going so fast. And I mean, you can probably guess which person I am in the relationship and which person my husband is. But the great thing about him and his slower pace is that he is so detail-oriented. And he makes things that are so thoughtful, and so well done, because of his slower pace, you know. And so I just think that there is real power in slowing down.

All right, another way that a sense of urgency can show up is that it quote, "Encourages shame, guilt and self-righteousness to manipulate decision making." End quote. Another thing she says is that it quote, "Makes it harder for us to distinguish what is really urgent from what feels urgent. After a while, everything takes on the same sense of urgency, leading to mental, physical, intellectual, and spiritual burnout and exhaustion." End quote. This one is so good. Like when everything matters, nothing matters. And that is totally how I've been feeling lately. And then the last one I want to share it says that a sense of urgency quote, "involves unrealistic expectations about how much can get done in any period of time, linked to perfectionism, in the urgency that perfectionism creates, as we try to make sure something is done perfectly according to our standards." End quote. That last part, where she talks about how the sense of urgency and perfectionism are linked really got me thinking, because I feel like they are directly linked for me, because together, they make me really, really intense about time and not wasting time. Like wasting time is something that bothers me so much. I feel like if I feel like I'm wasting time, or if someone else is wasting our time, I just go from zero to 60. Like I'm not yelling or anything, but internally, I'm like, freaking out like, "Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, you're wasting time. Oh, no, we're running out of time." Time is a really hard thing, especially as a mom. I mean, so many of you listening can probably relate to this. So many of us are parents, and whether you work or you stay home, it feels like there's never enough time. So feeling like time is being wasted is something that just really makes me so anxious and frustrated. And sometimes leaning into this sense of urgency makes me act like productivity is the only thing that matters. I really, I honestly debated even doing this episode, because I was thinking that it's not productive enough and that people won't care like, because I'm not teaching you something super concrete that you will turn around and have a quote to say to your child right about anti racism, or how to speak to a specific family member. Like there are so many episodes that we do about really specific vocabulary or action items. And this one feels a little bit more personal and a little bit more of that different kind of wisdom. But I was so nervous, because like even my heart is beating kind of fast just explaining this to you. I was just nervous thinking like, "People aren't going to see this as productive or helpful, so why are we making this episode?" And when I say

we, I mean, me because I'm the person who decided we would make it and I'm the one making it. But I just feel like it's really important to challenge myself in this way. So thanks for being on the ride with me, even though it can be a little anxiety-provoking.

One thing that I wanted to point out about perfectionism is that Tema Okun talks a lot about perfectionism versus excellence. And she says, quote, "There is no relationship between perfectionism and excellence. Excellence has more potential to be defined by us and for us. We can talk about what we think excellence is and hold ourselves and each other accountable to a shared and collectively defined standard of excellence. We can rock the boat with excellence, we can care for each other with excellence, we can write and lead and work and teach and cook with excellence. We can forgive with excellence. Excellence requires making and learning from mistakes. And even as I [Tema Okun] distinguish perfection from excellence, I also want to add that we don't have to strive for excellence either. Sometimes we just want to have fun, try something out." And in parentheses, she says, "Thank you Bevelyn Ukah." Then she goes on to say, "Sometimes, oftentimes, we arrive at a new way of thinking or doing that comes from playfulness and/or a lack of striving towards any particular standard. And even excellence is in the eye of the beholder." End quote. So when I saw that part that said "Thank you Bevelyn Ukah," I was like, "Okay, who is Bevelyn Ukah?" So I looked her up and Bevelyn Ukah is a Black equity consultant and artist, and I will link her website because her art is amazing and the work she does is really cool. And I really feel like I kind of convinced myself that I wasn't trying to be perfect. Like I've read through the characteristics a handful of times, and so recently, I was like, "I'm not trying to be perfect. I'm just trying to be excellent." But then I realized that I hadn't really defined excellence for myself outside of perfectionism. So even when we are thinking about these characteristics and trying to be reflective, sometimes it takes a few tries to really uncover what's going on. And if you're thinking that excellence and perfectionism are the same thing, then you might want to think again. Okay, so let me give you some examples.

I mean, I've shared as I'm sharing the characteristics and how they show up, kind of the different things that I feel like I see in myself, but I want to tell you about things that are actually happening in my life. So as I mentioned, wasting time is just a huge fear for me, because I'm a working mom, I have two kids, it just feels like I have so little, if any, honestly, extra time. And I noticed that in my leisure, I was feeling like I couldn't waste time because there was so little leisure time that I'm like, I must make sure that if I'm taking a break, I get the most enjoyment possible out of it, it must be the best break ever. So I was able to kind of break it down into three things in terms of my leisure. I don't watch movies. I don't read fiction, because it's not productive, quote, unquote, productive. And I spend time on social media, scrolling and looking for immediate gratification. So let me tell you about each of those things.

First of all, when people ask me what my favorite movie is, I just tell them that I don't like movies, I like TV. Which, I do love TV. And I think it's totally okay to love TV. I feel like some people are kind of snooty about it, like movies, or the cinema and TV is just for lowly people. But I really love TV. I love comedy. And I love understanding why something is funny. Like, why does something work? And I also love reality TV, I love "Sister Wives." If you know me know, I am obsessed with "Sister Wives." I've been watching it since it came out when I was very young. I think I was in middle school. And I've watched it for my entire life, basically. And one of the things I love about TV is that it's usually only about a 30-minute commitment. And I've always said that I don't like movies, because I don't want to

risk spending two hours watching a movie and then realize that I don't like it. Two hours just feels like such a long time to risk. And a little while back, Carter and I were watching this movie called "Honk for Jesus," and I literally said to him, before we turn it on, I'm going to take a risk and watch this movie. I was really excited about it because it was starring Sterling K. Brown, who is the guy from "This is Us." He plays Randall, and then Regina Hall, which, I love them both. And so I was just stoked to watch it. And then we watched it, and I hated the ending. I hated it. I hated it so much that I got angry. And I started going on and on about how movies are a waste of time. Like I was so upset after this movie, because I actually really, really liked the movie until the ending and the ending was just not what I wanted it to be. And I was like, "What was even the point? What a waste of time." So like I was saying, I feel like people act like movies are so much more sophisticated than TV and I totally disagree with that, we can have a long conversation about why TV is so wonderful. But I was realizing as I was thinking about that I was thinking, "Is the reason why I would say I don't like movies, really because I don't like movies? Or is it because I'm so terrified of wasting time that I don't give them a chance." Like is this "Honk for Jesus" movie really a waste of time? I liked it until about the last 10 minutes. So why would I consider it a waste of time when I actually did enjoy most of it. So that is movies, I was realizing that the sense of urgency that I have, especially around wasting time is probably keeping me from some really enjoyable movies, because I'm too afraid to take a risk and waste time. But now I'm realizing that even if I didn't like it, does that mean that the time is wasted? Just because I didn't like the ending? Is that a waste of time? Or did I just watch a movie that I mostly enjoyed and didn't like the ending?

You know, the next thing I was thinking about are books. So until very, very recently, I would have just told you that I don't read fiction. I only read nonfiction because I really like learning new things. And while that's true, I love learning new things, it's also true that the reason I haven't read fiction is because I don't view it as productive. I felt like it was such a waste of time. I was like reading fiction is for people who have a lot more time than I do, and there's no way I'm going to get very much out of reading a story when I could read a nonfiction book and learn something new. That's real. And I feel like it's really easy to see how my stance on reading fiction plays completely into that sense of urgency and perfectionism of white supremacy culture. And one thing I do want to say about this is that if you genuinely only read nonfiction because that's what you like, I am not saying that you're doing it because of white supremacy culture. As I mentioned, Tema Okun says that these characteristics are meant to be a self-reflection tool. And that's what I'm using it for. I'm using it for myself to reflect. And I realized that for myself, not reading fiction was definitely a result of white supremacy culture.

The other thing I started to think about was social media. So I feel like often when I would have some downtime, I would just grab my phone and start scrolling because I love to laugh like most people. And I feel like it's pretty easy to find something funny on social media, like you can just scroll and scroll and scroll and scroll until you find something that makes you laugh. And if I had a good laugh, then I felt like my break time wouldn't have been wasted. So I'm scrolling, I'm laughing, I'm getting this instant gratification. And I'm like, "Check, I didn't waste my break. Thank goodness, I did not watch a movie that I didn't like, I didn't read fiction, I just got a good laugh off of Tik Tok or Instagram or whatever. And I did a good job — pat on the back — of making sure that my break was amazing." So I just felt like I mean, first of all, we all know that scrolling on social media for a super long time is not great for your mental health. But I also was thinking, I don't want to be in this place where I am demanding instant gratification all the time. So I went back and read about perfectionism and urgency. And this quote

really stood out to me, Tema Okun said, quote, "Sometimes, we just want to have fun, try something out. (Thank you, Bevelyn Ukah). Sometimes oftentimes, we arrive at a new way of thinking or doing that comes from playfulness and or a lack of striving towards any particular standard." End quote. So as I was reflecting, and reading and thinking, "Okay, how am I going to try to push back against these characteristics of white supremacy culture that I see in my life, and especially in my leisure?" I thought I really want to do something just for the sake of doing it. Like I might enjoy it, or I might not. And that's okay. Either way, we'll be okay. And I thought, "What would feel like a big indulgence to me?" I landed on reading fiction. So I'm in a book club. And I was thinking about how the women in my book club are amazing. I don't think they're lazy. I don't think they're unproductive. And they all read fiction. And I don't know why I had this connection to like, "If you read fiction, you're probably not productive." That's so silly. And so it just doesn't even make any sense. But when I sat down and thought about it, I was like, "I guess that's the connection that I make with fiction and why I insist on reading nonfiction all the time." But I look at these women in my book club, and they're totally brilliant. And they're doing important work in the world. And they also read fiction. So I was like, "Maybe it's okay for me to try a little bit of fiction," I decided I was going to read something. And I went over to my bookshelf. And I literally can count on two hands how many fiction books I own. And I've already read all of them. I was like, totally laughing because I could not believe how bleak it was. I just didn't realize that I had been so committed to my obsession with only reading nonfiction for so long that I was down to less than 10 fiction books and them already being something that I had read, like a lot. I really couldn't tell you the last time I read a fiction book.

At this moment, I'm going to tell you about how I started reading fiction. But when I went over to my bookshelf that day, I was like, outside of listening to audiobooks, fiction was not a thing for me. And the thing is, audiobooks are productive, because you can do dishes, or you can mop the floors while you're doing it. So it didn't necessarily feel like I was wasting time or like an indulgence, because I would just pop the audiobook on, you're probably thinking like, "Okay, how were you in a book club if you didn't read fiction?" In our book club, somebody chooses three books, and then we vote, and I would only vote on the books that were offered as an audiobook version. Because I was like, that's the only way I read fiction is my audiobook. I will not be doing that anymore. But this is how committed I was to it. So I went and got a fiction book from the library. And guess what I did? I did not read it. I read about 25 pages of it. And then I just let it sit there until it was due. And so I took some time, which was rough but important to really sit down and think, "Okay, what is getting in my way?" Well, first of all, when I go to the library, I'm usually going with my kids or for my kids, I don't really browse for myself. And that is something that could change but honestly, it's just not as enjoyable when my kids are jumping all around and I'm trying to read the back of a book. It's just a lot. So I'm like, "Okay, that's not really something I want to do." I was thinking about how I need it to be as easy as picking up my phone, because that is a habit that I already have, and I feel like I need to be able to take it with me. That library book didn't get read because it just sat on my nightstand, and I didn't take it anywhere. So after watching lots and lots and lots of YouTube videos, I decided to buy a Kindle. But I honestly didn't trust myself to actually read on the Kindle, so I bought a used one for \$40. They're usually like \$100 or more, but I could not bring myself to spend that much money, because, you know, perfectionism. What if I don't read on my Kindle, and then I spent all this money, and then I feel like it was a waste. See, there's that word again. It's something that I really am working through. So I got a Kindle. And I was like, "Okay, I'm ready to read fiction." But then there was the complicated process of trying to find the, quote,

unquote, “right thing to read.” And I was like, “Oh, hey, perfectionism, showing up again,” as I tried to decide what to read. It really was eye-opening, honestly. And I had already accepted the fact that I might read something that I didn't like, I was like, “That is the whole point of this, you're just trying new things, you might read something that you don't like, and that's okay.” I was actively trying to accept that idea. And telling myself that if I did read something I didn't like, it wasn't the end of the world, and I wasn't wasting time. But I read a lot of nonfiction, obviously, especially for my job. And I read about racism and slavery and racial trauma all the time for work. And I just was feeling like, “I really don't want to read about it during my free time.” And so I was feeling really guilty, because I want to support BIPOC authors, but so many of them talk about these hard topics in their books. And I was just like, feeling super guilty about gravitating towards books by white authors. So I just told myself, “Jasmine, put the guilt down. You don't need to do this. If you scroll your Library app and it turns out that you're only reading things by white authors, it's not a forever thing, you'll figure it out.” And I was right, because I started reading books by these white authors that seems so white and fun and fluffy. And I realized that white authors have racism in their books, too. It's just that they don't realize it because they're white. So I was — trigger warning, because I'm about to talk about something racist that I read in a book — but it was a white author, and she was writing about her, well the main character was talking about, her children getting out of the bath. And she was saying something like, “They got out of the tub and they looked like refugee boat people.” And I was like, “What is happening?” So I reminded myself that just because you're not reading a book by a BIPOC author, that does not mean that you're not going to read about racism. So that was actually really helpful for me to realize, and it helped me branch out a little bit into Black and Brown authors and find some books that I really liked, even though they have racism in them.

And this also reminded me of something that I saw on Tik Tok recently. It was this Black woman who gives a lot of book recommendations, and she was saying, “Sometimes I just want to read white authors because of the escapism piece of it.” And there were a lot, there was like a really good discussion around what she said, a lot of people calling her in, a lot of people giving her recommendations of Black authors who write books that don't have trauma or racism in them. But a lot of people who were saying, “That is a stereotype, the idea that Black authors only write about struggle is a stereotype.” And I realized that that was something that I had totally bought into. The people in the comments were saying that it is harder for Black and brown authors to get widespread audiences because people are nervous to read their books, thinking that they're only going to be reading about struggle, and that there are so many Black authors who write books that are totally struggle free. But they also talked about the importance of including that struggle, because it is the reality of our lives, and that telling our stories without that piece of it is sometimes not as authentic. And so I really, I just really enjoyed that conversation. I felt like really grateful that someone else said that they had felt the same way that I did. But it helped me hold the mirror up to myself and realize that I was buying into a stereotype. And ever since realizing that white authors write about racism, too, they just say racist stuff, which is just as bothersome. I've opened myself up to reading BIPOC authors, and even though there is struggle in it, it doesn't necessarily feel like I'm at work, because I'm so invested in these stories that they're telling and in the characters and the way that they're exploring their experiences. And it's actually really nice to see some of my experiences reflected in the books even if it is the hard ones.

So this was a really long way of telling you that I have a Kindle that I really like. But I feel like it's just obviously so much more than that. I think breaking down that barrier for myself and realizing that reading fiction is another type of wisdom, just like Tema Okun talked about. It's just a different type of wisdom. It's something that can be really powerful. I mean, I've read some books now that I've been like, "Holy cannoli. I'm so grateful that I read this, because it made me feel less alone about some stuff that's going on in my life." And so I do want to tell you about some books that I really loved. I feel like these are the books that helped me fall in love with reading fiction, and I don't know. I hope you'll read them or tell me if you liked them. The first is called "Hotel Nantucket" by Elin Hildebrand. I've loved her books, they're so fun. She writes about — she's white, I should say — and she writes about Nantucket so all of her books are set in Nantucket, on the island of Nantucket. And this one is about a billionaire who invests in this old hotel, and it's a little spooky too, it's kind of like haunted and the billionaire spends all this money fixing up this hotel. And the staff at the hotel is trying to get this influencer, this travel influencer to give them a good review. And so they're working super hard to get this good review. And what I loved about the book is that there are so many characters and their lives are so interconnected and everything is so interesting. With all of Elin Hildebrand books, there's like secrets going on behind the scenes, people doing like some sassy interesting things. And I love — if you did ask me my favorite movie back in the day, it was "He's Just Not That Into You." I loved it because it was such good advice, and actually helped me in my dating life. But also, because there were so many characters and all of their stories are interconnected. That's so fun and fascinating to me. So if you like stories like that, like "Valentine's Day" or "He's Just Not That Into You," you would love "Hotel Nantucket."

The other one that I read was called "Black Cake" by Charmaine Wilkerson and I have recommended this book to my dad. He's reading it currently and I really want Carter to read it. I just think it is so good. Charmaine Wilkerson is Black. And this book is about a Black family whose roots are from the Caribbean, which was so cool, because as many of you know, that's where my Black side of the family is from. And it's about these two siblings who are estranged, and then their mother passes away. And before she dies, she makes this recording about her life, explaining the different things that they never knew about her, and uncovering all these secrets about their family that's really important for them to understand. And it's just, oh my gosh, it's so good. I just felt so connected to these characters. And like their stories were so powerful. They were both totally normal people and totally extraordinary people all in one. It was, it was really cool. So highly recommend "Black Cake." Totally five stars from me. I have two more to recommend. The first is "Happy Place" by Emily Henry. I saw this book going around and I was like, "Okay, this will be like, you know, a fun, like easy breezy read." The cover is bright pink. And I don't know, I didn't really take it that seriously. But then I read it and was totally wrecked by it. It's about these three college roommates, which is totally perfect, because my college roommates are my absolute best friends in the whole wide world. And so I just totally instantly saw us in these characters. And they go on a vacation every summer together. And the book follows their summer vacation. And it's always in the same place. And they're all just going through really big, important life milestones and changes and it just feels so, I just felt like it was really similar to my life right now. I mean, my friends and so many of us are in this moment where we're turning 30 and, or in our 30s, and figuring out like, is this what I want my life to look like? And what should it look like next? And who is going to be part of it? And I don't know, I just really liked it and I totally recommend it.

Okay, the last one I want to recommend, oh, I should say that Emily Henry is white. I think it's really important that I share that information about the authors.

The last one is by a Black author named Sadeqa Johnson. It's called the "House of Eve," and oh my gosh, this book, it was just so good. It's all about these two women, Eleanor and Ruby, and it's dual perspective, and it's a historical fiction. So it's set in 1950, and Eleanor is in DC, which is so fun, because that's where I live. And she, well — if you're from here and you're listening, don't get mad at me. I actually live in Maryland, but you know, close enough. Anyway, so Eleanor is going to Howard and she comes from a family that doesn't have very much money and she meets a boy who, oh my gosh, he sounds so dreamy. And he's from a pretty wealthy family. And so it's like her navigating that. And then Ruby lives in Philadelphia, and she's in high school, and she's trying so hard to go to college, and she would be the first person in her family to go to college. And so she's in this program at her high school that is meant to help get her scholarship. And it just follows these women in their lives in the 50s, navigating so many important aspects of Black womanhood, and I loved it so much. Please read it. It's so good.

Okay, those are the four books that helped me fall in love with reading fiction, and reading, like physically reading, there are so many other great audio books that I've listened to recently. But I feel like being able to tell you that I sat down and read a book that is fiction is really cool. I can't believe... I think if I had told myself a year ago that I would be giving book recommendations, fiction book recommendations, on the podcast, I would have been like, "Wait. Is this happening?" But I just want to end with this quote from Tema Okun. And from that podcast episode I told you about, she said, quote, "Very often I'm talking about deadlines that are self-imposed. And what I've found, I'm quite a bit older. Now, I finally understood that if I don't, as my friend says, push the river, if I allow some spaciousness in the way that I approach my work, or what I'm responsible for, often things happen in that spaciousness, that wouldn't have occurred or wouldn't have been possible if I'd pushed forward, like, I've got to get this done. And so I've come to really value that spaciousness because of what can emerge if I can allow the urgent voices inside me to just take a nap, and see what might be possible." End quote. So I really feel like that's what this process has done for me. It's created spaciousness in my life, it's created an opportunity for me to just embrace a different type of wisdom. And I'm so grateful that I have that going into my 30th year. And hopefully this next decade, I will read more than 10 fiction books. I just hope that you enjoyed this episode. And I'm really grateful that you would let me share a piece of myself with you. I love you.

Jasmine Bradshaw 47:15

I love talking to you. I feel like you have seen so much of the evolution of Jasmine, and I can't wait to see what 30 brings. So please, please, please leave First Name Basis a podcast review. I would just love it. And do you want to know what I'm doing for my birthday? I can't believe it. We're going on a cruise. I'm super excited. Carter and I are going on a cruise, just the two of us, which I feel a little nervous about leaving my kids for so long. But we're going for a week. And we're going to Jamaica, and we're going to the Bahamas, and it's just going to be so magical. We did the same thing for Carter's 30th birthday, which was four years ago. And after we finished it, we were like, we want to go again. And so we said we won't go on another one until I turned 30. So I can't believe it's here. But it's here.

And I'm leaving, like in a couple of days. And so if you're listening to this, I am literally on a boat, which is so exciting. I can't wait. So thanks so much for celebrating my birthday with me. I really love you.

Oh my goodness, thank you so much for listening. Hey, could you do me a favor and leave a podcast review? It really helps spread the word about the important anti-racist work we're doing together. But also make sure to join us on Instagram @firstname.basis, and don't forget to check out the show notes on our website at firstnamebasis.org, because that's where I say all the sources that I use to create this episode. That's also where I share tons of free resources to help you out on this journey. All right, I'll talk to you soon.