



Joanna Meyer:

You're listening to the Faith & Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Well, welcome back to the Faith & Work Podcast. Again, I'm Joanna Meyer. I am the director of Public Engagement at Denver Institute for Faith & Work. I'm here with Brian Gray, our VP of Formation and head of the 5280 Fellowship. Hi, Brian.

Brian Gray:

Good to be with you again today. Love the work you've done on this conversation and love hearing from my friend Brandon.

Joanna Meyer:

Oh, thanks. Yes, this is the second part of a broader conversation we're having with a local Denver pastor named Brandon Washington. He pastors Embassy Christian Bible Church. He also is the author of a new book by Zondervan, *A Burning House*... I need to dig out the subtitle. I'll provide that in our show notes at the end of the show.

... Which I personally found haunting when I read it. It invites us to a deeper understanding of the practical implications of a broad vision of the gospel lived out in the world, specifically as it relates to race and Brandon's own journey as a Black man and faith leader in a community that doesn't always receive him well. So that's what we'll be talking about.

And, Brian, to kick us off today, I wanted to hear your thoughts on the idea of virtuous discussion. In this episode, we pick up the conversation with Brandon with a quote from Pastor Bryan Loritts, where he talks about "being in need of a virtuous deconstruction". And I know that's a trendy word right now. People of faith may hear other people in their community talking about "being in a season of deconstructing their faith", which can mean a wide variety of things. I guess I have a two-part question for you, Brian. One is, what do you think most people mean when they say deconstruction? And in contrast, what would a virtuous deconstruction be?

Brian Gray:

Yeah, we'll talk towards the beginning with this about Brandon and hear his perspective. What's really helpful about the conversation with Brandon is, though a primary application in his book and in our conversation is about the way he has seen issues of ethnic injustice, racial injustice handled, it really, for all of us, no matter what we're doing, where we are in work and culture, we absolutely have to pay attention to that, but we can also bring this back up to the ladder to think in terms of ways that our Christian faith tradition has been helpful to us, potentially limiting to us as well.



And so I think this concept of deconstruction, Joanna, to be frank, it's a hard one for me. I've wrestled with significant amounts of doubt in my faith over the years and have been asking very difficult questions since I was about 17, is when this started for me. And they were sometimes intellectual, they were mostly experiential, oftentimes connected to the idea of hearing from the Lord and feeling like Christians address and handle that and describe that in some ways that sometimes feels odd. And so my own process has been looking at this idea of, quote, unquote, "deconstruction", which is, what are the things that we've been handled, or the construction of this house of our faith, if you will? What do we need to take down? But the second half that's really important, we need to consider it a remodeling project and a renovation, not a leveling.

And so I think one of the hard things for me is I've just had a lot of friends who have walked away, actually some of the folks that are closest to me, and I can say that because they won't listen to this podcast anymore. And what's hard is that a deconstruction implies and assumes a reconstruction of more helpful things. And I think, and we'll ask Brandon out of the gate, but it's my suspicion that most people have more hangups with the Christian subculture, listen to this music, do these types of things, what's in bounds, what's out of bounds, than they do the actual biblical beliefs or maybe the theological tradition that a well-examined Christianity would offer them.

So the subculture is tough, let's own it, and just be really frank with that. You look at the political landscape. You're like, "I don't want..." I'm a political independent, just outing myself. I don't want anything to do with the polarization and the partisan politics and the captivity of Christian belief on certain issues. But if I just go walk away from the faith because of that, that is a deconstruction, period. Not a reconstruction, reconstructing a hopeful place in the middle for politics and public square engagement. And so it'd be my hope that there would be both, so as people are doing the one, would they do the other. And I think some of the conversations Brandon invites us into are a helpful process on that.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, he does a beautiful job of being honest about the deep pain that he often feels in evangelical circles and what it has both cost him and his deep commitment to staying within that faith tradition. So I hope it's a really encouraging example of what virtuous deconstruction can look like, and we'll lead off with a quote from Bryan Loritts on the very topic.

Brian Gray:

This is a quote, I believe it's from Bryan Loritts, but as you say, "We are in need of a virtuous deconstruction, where the content of the gospel is emancipated from its cultural capacity."

Brandon Washington:

Yes. Yes.



Brian Gray:

This is what you're describing. Expand on that.

Brandon Washington:

Okay. So content of-

Brian Gray:

And what makes it v... And, Brandon, what would make it virtuous in particular as opposed to the deconstruction you see?

Brandon Washington:

I love that... So, Joanna, you're getting a glimpse into what coffee shop means between Brian and Brandon, okay? Because he'll always ask me a question, and the question is always a two-parter. Since you're about to go-

Brian Gray:

It's always a... Or three-parter.

Brandon Washington:

So the reason I had to carefully identify what I'm doing here as virtuous deconstruction is, from the moment I became vocal on this issue, I have been charged with being a critical race theorist. And critical race theory, one of the premises of critical racism is deconstruction. Now, on June 20th... I guess technically this would be a shameless plug, but that's not the intent. It's relevant here. On June 20th, a book called *Urban Apologetics*, the second volume of *Urban Apologetics*, comes out, and I was commissioned to write the chapter in that book on critical race theory. And one of the things I had to say in there explicitly is, "I am not a critical race theorist." And I had to say that on the basis that I believe critical race theory does not have a gospel. And one of its shortcomings at the popular level is it's so gifted, it's so good at deconstructing an institution, that the practitioners never get around to building. They're only deconstructing. They're always tearing it down. And I would argue that's not a virtuous act.

From a Christian perspective, you apply deconstruction with the intention of getting around to restoration. You have to tear the bad parts away so that you can rebuild it into something that's healthy and God honoring. So I want to avoid the mistake of merely tearing evangelicalism down. If I believe it's something that can be redeemed, then eventually I have to get around to building it up to what it's supposed to be.



Brian Gray:

This is a Pauline rhythm, you are putting off the old and putting on the new.

Brandon Washington:

There you go. That's its value.

Joanna Meyer:

Okay, here's the question I have for you is, why have you chosen to stay? Because I know a lot of your peers who are fellow Black faith leaders have said, "There is not a home for me in evangelicalism." And even Martin Luther King knew this back in the civil rights movement. He anticipated the tension that you're saying you named your book after, and he said, "I fear that I'm integrating my people into a burning house."

Brandon Washington:

Yes.

Joanna Meyer:

Why are you still here?

Brandon Washington:

Okay, so, in fact, Martin Luther King is the reason, because he did say that. He said that more than once. That's a phrase that he paraphrased. He co-opted it from James Baldwin, who first said that in a book called *The Fire Next Time*. And he actually mentioned that during an interview after... Everyone quotes the I Have a Dream speech, but they only quote two or three lines from the I Have a Dream speech and they miss the whole point, that he's being critical of how the American dream is being executed. They miss that broader point. And they also overlook the fact that, after 1963, he voiced some regrets regarding that speech and he says, "I was a little too optimistic. I oversimplified the matter." Everyone talks about assessing people, particularly children in the context of the speech, according to the content of their characters and the color of their skin. They snatched it out of its context, and they also overlooked the fact that, after 1963, he looked back on having said that and said, "I regret some of that language."

And the best articulation of that burning house context is he was having a private conversation with Harry Belafonte, and Belafonte mentions this in his memoir, he says, "I fear we're integrating our people into a burning house." And Harry Belafonte asked him, "Then what do we do?" I mean, we're already down this road. What do we do? We'd been integrating people into this burning house for decades at that point. This was in 1968. This is only months before King was assassinated. And Dr. King's response to that was, "I guess we have to become firemen."



I have been integrating people into the burning house that I would call evangelicalism for half of my life, all of my adult life. And I do that on the basis I believe the evangelicalism has sound theology. Its orthodoxy is solid. I stand firm on it. The issue is not evangelical theology, it's evangelical ethics. It's the social ethics. And I said, "You can address that by becoming a fireman and putting the fire out from the inside." A lot of my friends are saying, "Just leave the house. Let that burn down. Let's build a new house." And frankly, while I'm not where they are... You should hear me say this, this is a transparent moment. While I'm not where they are, I can see them from where I am, okay?

Evangelicalism is slowly losing me. And that's the language I thought I would never use, but evangelicalism is slowly losing me, because it's hard to put out a fire when no one thinks the house is ablaze and they're offended by the desire to extinguish the fire from within. And so I'm not leaving, I'm being shown the door, I'm being pushed out, okay? And some of the language I've received in response to this book is just devastating. It's injury to my soul that reminds me of just how necessary the book is. Having said that, I think I can confront the fire from the inside much more effectively than I can from the outside. And I refuse to relinquish the term "evangel". I refuse to let it go. The word means too much to me.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Meyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & Work, and I'd like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50, or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institute's ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors, and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you, as a monthly partner, you will receive a welcome box. You'll have exclusive access to private digital content, personalized vocational coaching, and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit denverinstitute.org/give or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer:

I wanted to read a quote from Carl F H Henry, who founded Christianity Today. You quote him in the book, and it's just beautiful. He said, "Social justice is not simply an appendage to the evangelical message; it's an intrinsic part of the whole, without which the gospel is truncated." And as we talk about this, we think about some of the challenges that you're talking about really hit at some of the core beliefs of American Christians. It may even some of our listeners as we think about what American democracy and patriotism looks like. What do you think as a Christian it looks like to live in that tension of considering themes of social justice in a culture that also values democracy and freedom and things that could be noble but are imperfectly applied? How do we live in that tension?



Brandon Washington:

A couple of things there. So first of all, a few years ago, an acquaintance of mine wrote an open letter to me in response to... I had an article published in Christianity Today that's entitled Black and Evangelical: Why I Keep the Label. And an acquaintance of mine contacted me. Well, he didn't contact me, he wrote an open letter and posted it to social media, and he tagged me on it so that I could see the open letter.

"Dear Brandon Washington, Social justice is not the gospel."

And I need to make this very clear. I've never said it is. I'll make that very clear. I never said it is. However, I believe it is an inevitable fruit. It is innately linked. It's inextricably linked to the gospel. To be an advocate of the gospel, to identify yourself as an advocate of the gospel, and not be mindful of its relevance to a fallen world is a truncation... To use called Carl F H Henry's language, it's a truncation of the message given to us. I think that what we've done here is we've reduced the gospel's scope because it's much more convenient.

I try to illustrate it this way. I have a pear tree in my front yard. And I did not know it was a pear tree. Did not know it. I found out because my HOA hired tree trimmers to come to my house to trim the tree. And I liked that tree. When we bought the house, it was a sapling. I'm a fan of the tree. And it has these blooms on it. In fact, this is the time of year it's covered in these white blooms. And when I got out of my car, they're standing under the tree with their tools in hand. And I asked them, "What are you doing?" And they told us that the HOA hired them to trim the trees. But when I walked up, they were not trimming the tree, they were talking about the tree, because they realized this is not one of the trees that they were hired to trim. Because the HOA told them, "You can't trim the fruit trees in the neighborhood. We don't want you touching the fruit trees". And I said to them, "I didn't know it was a fruit tree."

My frustration with them trimming my trees was gone, because now I have questions about this tree they now tell me is a fruit tree, because it's never borne any fruit. And the leader of the team referred to it as a "domesticated pear tree". And by that he meant that botanists had bred out of this tree the capacity to bear fruit. And I asked why someone would do that. And he says, "You want the tree, you want the blooms, you want the shade, but you don't want the pears in your yard. So you want to have all the benefits of the tree without the inconvenient fruit."

I would argue that we have domesticated the gospel. We want everything that we want from the gospel, but the inconvenient fruits, we bred those, we've reduced the message, to get rid of those. So confronting the racial rift with the gospel is something we don't get around to. We dump that onto the things that Jesus will fix when He gets back. We said, "Wait until later. It'll get fixed then." That's easy to say when you're not the one enduring the downside of those racial rifts.

Instead of following through on the commission to bring the gospel to bear on them, we're telling everyone to wait. And I'm saying we are empowered, we're spirit-filled, and we are gospel



wielding. It is sin for us to sit on the sidelines and watch social justice, racial brokenness occur in the world when we can confront it with the incomparable comprehensive gospel message. And I think that we're going to give an account on the day that we see our King, because He equipped us to confront something that we decided is none of our business.

Brian Gray:

Brandon, one of the things about our friendship over the years is you have taught me to do practical things from our conversations. And I'm going to name a couple, and that is just as a tribute to this grace and truth from you. Brandon, I walk into rooms and I count now because you taught me to count. You said, "Every Black man walks into a room and they count how many of other Black men are in the room," and I count in every room I'm in. The count most often wins, by the way, on my favor. My family just went to Birmingham. We had a free day. My wife said, "What do you want to do?"

"Brandon would send me to the steps of 14th Street Baptist Church.

Brandon Washington:

There you go.

Brian Gray:

We went to the Birmingham Civil Rights Museum. So I've learned to take action on a few things because I've been, Joanna's word earlier was haunted, haunted or implicated by some of the things you and I have talked about and some of the things I've gone on to learn. So I'm going to ask you, perhaps as a parting question, help implicate... The gospel implicates us, help implicate people. What are next steps that they would act on, something that they can do, as they consider our words?

Brandon Washington:

Yeah, so this is what you're doing when you walk into the room and you try to get a read of a room from the perspective of a person of color, and this is what you're doing when you visit the Civil Rights Museum in, of all places, Birmingham, which I would argue is ground zero for much of the progress that occurred from the '60s forward.

Brian Gray:

Birmingham.

Brandon Washington:

Because that was the first time, not just nationally but internationally, viewers from the outside saw what was going on. Again, I evoke the rhetoric of James Baldwin. He said, "White people



want to think Birmingham is on Mars. It's the action of extraterrestrials, not fellow Americans," but that museum is a reminder that that's not true. And I have a relationship. One of the men who planted the church with me is a dear friend of mine. His name is Derrick Kelsey, and he's from Birmingham, Alabama. His mother was one of the high school students who was arrested during the 1963 Birmingham campaign. She showed me a photo of her in a makeshift jail. They converted the state fairgrounds into a jail. They had so many people to incarcerate, they had to make jails, and they jailed all the teenage girls together at the state fair.

Parenthetically, I want to say this. They were not able to look at the state fair the same way ever again from that day forth, "This is the place where I was jailed." So that scar exists to this day. And the crime that provoked that arrest was they were advocating for the integration of schools. That's what they were trying to do. She said this to me. She said, "I wanted my son, if he wanted to, to be able to attend the University of Alabama." And this was during a time when that was a point of contention and-

Brian Gray:

It was being blocked actively by the state governor.

Brandon Washington:

The governor stood on the steps and says, "You will not get by me." And her son, by the way, Derrick Kelsey, ended up graduating from the University of Alabama.

Brian Gray:

I've hated that forever, and I've given him shade forever on that, and now you just redeemed it. I cannot believe you just redeemed something about Alabama football.

Brandon Washington:

Alabama, I'm telling you.

Joanna Meyer:

Oh.

Brandon Washington:

And by the way, he's that guy. Whenever you see him, he's wearing the crimson and he's letting you know, you will hear him at some point, "Roll tide." He graduated from Alabama because Mother Kelsey took a stand as a 16-year-old for children she'd yet to bear. Now, I mention that to you because I knew the facts about the Birmingham campaign. I've seen the photos of German shepherds. I've seen video of fire hoses and people clubbed and arrested, children, teenagers arrested that day. I've seen it, but I exposed myself to someone who was there.



So that's the same thing as going to the museum. That's the same thing as walking into the room and trying to see it from the perspective of a Black person. It gives you perspective. It changes your hermeneutic. It affects the lenses through which you interpret a moment. You try to see it from the perspective of someone who is other. Now, that does not create a reality, but it allows you to see something that you may not have noticed before, and seeing the thing you didn't notice before may affect how you interpret the racial divide in America.

Everyone knows this. My wife drives a minivan. I promise her I would never buy a minivan. Before we were married, I made a promise, "I'm not going to have you driving a minivan." She says, "If we have children, you have to buy me a suburban." She made me promise. And just the functionality of the minivan won me over. And it has a DVD player that the kids can listen to, and it comes with Bluetooth headphones so they can listen to whatever they're watching and we don't have to hear it, and stow-and-go seating, it sells itself. And we ended up renting one to drive to Texas. And during the drive to Texas, between Denver and Dallas, she became a convert. We got back, we bought one. And as we're leaving the dealership, before we pulled out of the lot, I'm waiting to get onto the main street, and a twin van drove by and we saw several of them on the way home.

Now, the Chrysler Town & Country, which is what this van is, the Chrysler Town & Country/Dodge Caravan, that's the same vehicle essentially, is the most sold minivan in the history of minivans, but I had never noticed them. I'd never noticed them. The vans had always been there, but I'd never noticed them. I didn't notice them until I had a Chrysler Town & Country experience. It gave me lenses to see something that was always there.

You don't gain that perspective until you expose yourself to the lenses, the perspective of others. The Civil Rights Museum, African-American History Museum, walking into the room and trying to see it from the perspective of your close friends of color, it will allow you to see something that was always there but you never noticed it. And seeing the thing that you didn't notice before should affect your interpretation.

While I would argue that interpreters are not changing, the information... I'm sorry, information is not changing, the interpreters should. The information is static, but the one using that information should experience change as new information comes. And you do that only by trying to see it from the other's perspective. If not, you just find yourself with a group of people who all agree on the same thing, and you become an echo chamber, and you all cosign one another's perspective, and you will then dismiss the legitimate cries of people who are marginalized and asking for us to apply a relevant gospel to their marginalization.

Joanna Meyer:

Hey, Brandon, I want to close our conversation by giving you a chance to have the final word. But what stands out to me is it's easy to hear a conversation like this and for your heart to be moved and think, "I want to live differently. I want to love differently, and understand brothers



and sisters in faith and also just people who are different than me in my community," and then do nothing about it. Or, it can feel so overwhelming that you don't even know where to start.

And I ask this question at the risk of it feeling very simplistic, but how would you invite our listeners to act on what they're hearing? If someone is intrigued by this idea of a broader gospel and beginning to consider what the social implications of a life of faith are, what's the next step for them?

Brandon Washington:

Okay, so, okay, a couple things here. Number one, my experience has been that because of the contamination of partisanship and tribalism, we read poorly. We're just bad readers. Tim Keller was the one who impressed that upon me. I mourned his passing as though I had lost a long-standing friend, and I've never met him. But he was the example of what I call ortho... He was a living example of ortho balance, one who applied the gospel in a relevant way. He espoused orthodoxy and valued orthopraxy. And the article he wrote in the New York Times regarding political partisanship and the assumption that, as to be a good believer, you must identify with one party, that was a moment where I saw the need for the balance. And I recognized that we're bad readers because the agenda is to affirm the tribe that we've chosen. So we read to ratify our ideas instead of edify ourselves. We have to look for a cosign instead of subject ourselves to points of complicated growth, things that may challenge our ideas. We deal with the complexities of that.

So the first thing I would do is, this goes to the point earlier about exposing yourself to the other, I would deliberately seek out the alternative perspective. Make sure it's credible, make sure it's well done, make sure it's on the academic level of whatever you've already been reading that ratifies, that affirms, that confirms your ideas, but make sure that you expose yourself to alternative ideas because it will then nuance the idea that you have.

And then the bigger point that I try to drive home is... I have three points here. The bigger part I'm trying to drive home is we're not having to reinvent anything here. I think evangelicalism's already healthy, so this is a matter of theological retrieval. Brian, you know David Buschart.

Joanna Meyer:

Yep, I-

Brandon Washington:

I remember, he just drilled that into my head.

Joanna Meyer:

... I know David Buschart well.



Brandon Washington:

Yeah, he drilled that into my head. When I was in seminary, he was one of the professors I was exposed to, because I was a systematic theology major. He was one to whom I was exposed most. And he's a historical theologian, so the values of theological retrieval were a constant refrain, either explicitly or implicitly, in how he approached what he was teaching. And his posture was go back to evaluate who we were, and revitalize, retrieve the good ideas that we've always had instead of reinventing this wheel. That's something I drive home.

And then the third thing is I believe that the solution to this problem is global evangelical integration. Not merely local, but global. Okay, so I am not Anglican. I tell people all the time, "I'm Anglican adjacent." I have about three or four friends who are doing their best to come and-

Brian Gray:

Jesus forgives you. He already forgives you, for things done and left undone.

Joanna Meyer:

There's a lot of Anglican adjacent folks in the Faith & Work movement.

Brandon Washington:

Oh, oh, listen to me, I have at least four friends who are doing their best to come and get me. I am too deeply entrenched in my Baptist ways, but, Brian, you would know all these people. And, Joanna, I pray for you, because I know you're exposed to them on a regular basis, but they are staunch advocates of the Anglican camp. I'm a fan of everyone I know associated with that camp, because when I first met... You know Billy Waters. He's a pastor here in our city. And when I was first introduced to that particular arm of the Anglican movement and heard the story, the thing he pointed out was, because of the decline of the theological dissent of the movement in America, they exist under Rwandan leadership. They existed, they were functional missionaries that served in partnership with Rwandan leaders. And that is a brilliant thing, because Rwanda brings perspective to suffering and marginalization that is foreign to dominant culture Americans.

During the civil rights movement, American Christian leaders would have benefited from sitting at the feet of Bishop Desmond Tutu, who, if I'm not mistaken, is Anglican. I'm starting to see a trend here, okay? They would've benefited in hearing the opposing evaluations regarding segregation. They would've benefited from hearing from a missionary who's been battling apartheid at a national level for the duration of his life. And that kind of thing happens when you integrate the body, perspectives come together, and it knocks my rough edges off, and it also exposes the other camps to the good ideas that I have, and we become much more whole. Our theology is more robust and equipped to confront the brokenness in the world that only the gospel can repair.



So you have to retrieve our good theology. You have to expose yourself to alternative ideas. And don't read to ratify, but read to edify yourself. And then global integration of the church. It's not an accident that evangelical is thriving in the global south, in Latin America and Africa, while it is descending in the West, in America and in Europe. We should expose ourselves to the good ideas that are common among Orthodox Christian leaders in the global south so we can have a more robust gospel message.

Brian Gray:

I'm ready to pass the offering plates a second time after this one. I think we can kind of up the tithe from the first time. Brandon, you are a gift before anything else, you're just a gift to me. You're creating a legacy gift inside my family because you've been a mentor to me, and I listen to you and you shape who I'm becoming. And for that, I'm really grateful.

Brandon Washington:

I'm blessed by that. That makes my day.

Joanna Meyer:

Wow, what a powerful two-part conversation with Pastor Brandon Washington. In our show notes today, we will be linking to Brandon's book, *A Burning House: Redeeming American Evangelicalism by Examining Its History, Mission, and Message*. We will also link to the *Urban Apologetics* book by Eric Marsh that he mentioned. But before we go, Brian, I just want to hear, you and I have sat with Brandon now for a length of time and really processed what he has to say, in your own life, how do you want to respond when you hear what Brandon's saying?

Brian Gray:

Well, I get the really distinct but difficult advantage of having a long friendship with Brandon. And so as I just mentioned at the very beginning, I saw him as a trusted source and an honest source that I could be in relationship with and say, "Brandon, I just need to ask some questions. I need to listen. I need to learn from somebody." So I'd say as a next step for most people, when I asked him that he was a bit incredulous at first that I really meant it, and he had to see if he believed if I meant it or not. But I mean, the number of things that have come out of that initial conversation for me have been really helpful, have shaped actually a lot of our work at the Denver Institute.

So I would encourage people, if they want to take a next step, to look to have a listening and learning posture. And that can start... Don't go find your one friend who's a person of color and hit them up and ask them to be your mentor. Maybe I got away with what I shouldn't have been doing, but we can listen to voices that are outside. But the key here is to listen to understand, not to listen to respond. Listen to understand, not listen to defend. Listen to understand, not



listen to "yeah, but". I just want to take people from their perspective and make sure I have fully heard them so I can begin to let that shape me in my own learning.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, I think as I have waded into these conversations about, just with folks that are different than me, whether it's someone from a different ethnic background, different socioeconomic or theological tradition, it only reminds me of my own ignorance. And I have really learned how to channel curiosity, because I'm one of the most curious cats you'll ever meet, I have a question about anything and everything, but it can be exhausting to friends of color, for example, for me to expect them to be the interpreter of all things Black for me.

And so that has meant that I just have made a commitment to a couple things. One is to listen and do my homework. And so if I have a question I think is going to make someone uncomfortable, I'll research it on YouTube or I'll research it on Google or read a book to really become familiar with what my friends are experiencing. And then if I want to ask them in person, I'll engage them, but I try and not use my friends to satisfy my curiosity. And also, I just want to put myself in spots where I have an opportunity to just listen more than form my own opinions, but just be open to absorbing the experience. And that just comes from acknowledging that other people are different and that they have a different experience that merits consideration.

And I think sometimes in the tension that we have in this cultural moment around race, that we shut the conversation down of labeling it as something like critical race theory, and it prevents us from even just sitting with someone as a fellow human being whose experience might be different than my own. And so I try to just tamp down any reactivity and just listen and observe.

Brian Gray:

That's good.

Joanna Meyer:

But that's kind of my lived experience from having done it wrong a few times that I would want to share with our audience. So thanks for being part of this two-part conversation with us. Again, we will link to both Brandon's books and any of the books that have been mentioned through this podcast episode in today's show notes. So thanks for joining us today.

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