

Girls Night #228: How Looking Back at our History Helps us Understand our Present, our Future and Ourselves Better — with Jasmine L. Holmes

0:00:05 - Stephanie

Hey friends, welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I'm so happy that you're here. Each week, I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women. We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends, and I cannot wait to get started. Friends, I'm so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how looking back at our history helps us understand our present, our future and our self-spudder.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend, Jasmine Holmes. Jasmine is a mom, a historian, a grad student and a writer. She has just a few things going on. Her newest book is called *Crowned with Glory: How Proclaiming the Truth of Black Dignity Has Shaped American History*. Now I wanted to have Jasmine on the show because I've spent a lot of time lately looking back at our history as women, seeing where we've been and how we got to where things are today. It's given me so much insight and context into my present to know more about my past.

So when I saw that Jasmine had written a book kind of on the same theme, I knew I wanted to hear what this looked like for her. I wanted to hear about the journey of writing this book and about digging back into history, and I wanted to know what she's learned from it. So, guys, Jasmine is a brilliant teacher. She answered all of my questions so beautifully, both the huge ones that were probably really hard to answer, and also the ones that I worried might be kind of dumb. Her answers were somehow simultaneously simple and easy to understand, but also totally profound. I learned so much in this conversation and I cannot wait to share it with you. Jasmine is a treasure. You're going to love her. All right, friends, I'm super excited for who you get to meet. Today, I'm sitting here with my new friend, Jasmine Holmes. Jasmine, thanks so much for coming to Girls Night. Thank you for having me. For women who haven't met you yet, can you tell us who you are, what you do and a fun?

0:02:13 - Jasmine

fact about yourself. Yes, I am a historian. I have three children. They are seven, almost five and two. I'm married to Phillip. He's an entrepreneur, so we both work from home. I'm a writer and I'm in grad school, and life is crazy. It's a little bit crazy right now, but happy, crazy.

0:02:35 - Stephanie

So you're basically an underachiever who just has a lot of free time on her hands.

0:02:39 - Jasmine

I'm a slacker who is definitely not a gifted child. Definitely not.

0:02:45 - Stephanie

I just that is yes, you have a lot going on. I have two two-year-olds who are going to be three next month.

0:02:55 - Jasmine

Oh true.

0:02:57 - Stephanie

And so, yeah, twins, but I don't have three, so anyway.

0:03:03 - Jasmine

Yeah, that's what my friends who are twin moms first are always like I don't have anything else to compare it to because they're just I had twins, yeah.

0:03:13 - Stephanie

Yeah, it's just how it is. Well, they'll take naps after this. Yes, okay, tell me your fun fact.

0:03:20 - Jasmine

I have two fun facts and they come from the fact that I am a homeschooler and a total nerd. So I can name all of the presidents in order, from Washington all the way to Biden, and if you ask me a state, 98% of the time I can tell you that state's capital.

0:03:39 - Stephanie

That is, and I tell you that I am so jealous of that fact. I am so jealous of that fact because I was just talking to someone about this. I swear that like I wish I could take out the lyrics of I don't know, just off the top of my head, like the thong song, and replace it with all of the presidents and all of the capitals, because I feel like I would get like a D, I could do the capitals better, but the president test absolutely not. And I mean like for what?

0:04:11 - Jasmine

though, because we live in the age of Google and so it's just like if you want to know the president that came after Lyndon B Johnson, you can just look it up in like the same two seconds, I know.

0:04:22 - Stephanie

You know, I know, but okay, but my husband is like the guy who knows everything and so he always looks at me and is like where did you go to school? And I'm like a good school. I just like I don't know. That fact got replaced with like every lyric to every in sync song that has ever existed and my best friend's phone number growing up. And bad life, it's not a bad life.

0:04:46 - Jasmine

My number is still my parents phone number from when I lived at home 10 years ago. That is amazing. Yep, I still. I still get those fuel point. My parents live out of the country, so their fuel points just were bequeathed to me and I've just kept the fuel points going all this time.

0:05:01 - Stephanie

That is amazing. That is amazing Random thing. Where do your parents live? They live in Zambia.

0:05:08 - Jasmine

So right above South Africa and right next to Zimbabwe.

0:05:13 - Stephanie

Cool. Okay, I have so many more questions on that, but I feel like I don't want to derail us. Maybe we'll ask those at the end. That's really cool. So I want to tell you the backstory of why I really wanted to talk to you.

I have been doing a lot of research of my own lately, looking at our history as women and just seeing where we've been, how we got to the way that things are today, tracing threads back of like I feel like I'm supposed to do something this way and being like where did that come from? And it's always starts somewhere. Some person in the 40s wrote a book about whatever and women were expected to do. It's just all tied together. And so looking back at our past as women has given me so much insight and context into our present as women, and so when I saw that you had written the book that you just wrote, I really really wanted to hear what you've learned, both in the writing of it, but then also like, as you've been digging into the past, kind of just how you've seen it all connect. It's like such a theme for me right now.

So I basically am just going to like ask a like I know you talked about this somewhere in the book. Tell us everything that you have to tell us. Yeah, I think that's my plan. Okay, that's exciting. Okay, so tell us first about the book. So the book I haven't written down. It's called Ground With Glory how proclaiming the truth of Black dignity has shaped American history. Tell us about the book and like how did this project come about for you?

0:06:49 - Jasmine

So the book is basically a historical survey of Black abolitionists and how they use the concept of the Amago Day or the image of God to argue against chattel slavery, to say chattel slavery is wrong because all men, all men, are created equal. They're all created in God's image and because of that they are worthy of dignity and they're worthy of respect. And it was just. It's a really simple premise. But the simplicity of it is that it was everywhere in abolitionist work, it was everywhere in abolitionist speeches, it was everywhere in abolitionist petitions, it was everywhere in the conversation the image of God, the image of God, the image of God, over and over again. It was like a pillar of abolitionist thought. And I found that so interesting.

And whenever I write a book, I always set out to just write what I find to be so interesting. And I was like I want to read a book about this and so and I don't see a book about this, that's like on

the, on the level that I want it to be, there's academic books about it and there's dissertations, and but I was like I want to make, I want to write a book that could be used in the classroom. If somebody wanted to use it or they could read, you know, pretty easily, and so that's how, that's how Chroma Glory was born. I did, I wrote a book right before Chroma Glory called Cards in Ebony, and it was about 10 black women whose faith inspires us, and all of those women were kind of from the same like antebellum period, and so I just dug deeper into the research and wrote this one.

0:08:18 - Stephanie

So cool, okay. So yeah, I have a million questions about about, like, really, the book cover for Carved in Ebony that's what it's called, right, uh-huh, uh-huh, is stunning, is stunning. Yes, it is so beautiful. Um it just, I remember, I have it like in my brain. Tell me you said chattel slavery, uh-huh, uh-huh. Tell me, like, why talk to me through that phrasing? Specifically because I know you didn't like choose it on accident. Yeah, absolutely.

0:08:47 - Jasmine

So when we talk about slavery, do you like how I just like, nerdily, grab my glasses as soon as I'm about to go deep into my? That's my. It's literally a habit that I do. I'm like so. So let me push these up because I'm getting ready the advisor about something and I got so excited and I was doing that, but I was like excited at the same time and I literally is our first meeting ever where I was going to ask maybe my thesis advisor and I've flung my glasses across the room and I was like, please work with me.

0:09:19 - Stephanie

So sorry.

0:09:20 - Jasmine

It was like you're really passionate.

0:09:21 - Stephanie

I was like yes, I am really passionate. This is how passionate I need new glasses.

0:09:25 - Jasmine

I just broke up the glasses are over there. Hold on. I literally had to like be like I'm, like go back. But whenever we talk about slavery, a lot of times people are confused about why the slavery in America is different from slavery as it was practiced in other places in other times, and so chattel slavery is just a terminology that talks about the idea of human property.

There's all different kinds of slavery. There's slavery because your tribe beat another tribe and you take those people into for servitude. There's the kind of slavery where somebody has a debt and so they go into for servitude in order to be off the debt there is. And then there's the kind of slavery that we talked about in America, which is a slavery that's based on race, a slavery that is generational, so it's passed down from generation to generation and you can't get out of it. And it's also passed down through the mother instead of the father, in England, for instance. So

England had a pretty similar like baseline for slavery in the 1700s. But according to British law, if you are a white male slave owner and you have a child with a black enslaved woman, that child is free and you have to take care of that child. And you have to provide for that child because you're that child's father. Well, in America they flipped the role and said okay, if you are a white slaveholder and you have a child with a black enslaved woman, the child follows a condition of the mother, so that slaveholder doesn't have a child anymore, that slaveholder has more property. And so the idea is just this, completely because the slave trade, like the actual transatlantic going to Africa, bringing people overseas, was officially ended in America in the year 1808.

But from 1808 to 1865, slavery in America grew three times as large. How that happened? Well, the whole idea of breeding practices and forcing black women to have as many children as they could, and talking about their breeding and their slavery, the kind of the same way that you would talk about, honestly, cattle, the kind of things that are chattels. We still talk about chattel now, but we do now. We mean land, we mean goods, we mean animals and unfortunately, black folk used to be lumped in with that. So that's what I mean by chattel slavery.

You kidding me? No, I know, I know it's, you know. I think one of the things that I learned so much is that these things are not incidental. I feel like oftentimes, when we talk about slavery in American history. We kind of talk about it like oh shucks, those founders. They just it just grew too big and they didn't know what to do and so they just had to. But once you see, like the legislative, like no, we're making steps to keep this and we're making steps to protect this and we're exploiting those steps, once you see that it just it puts things in a whole new light for sure.

0:12:25 - Stephanie

Yeah, I mean it is going to take me a minute no. I didn't. I didn't. Yeah, I didn't know that. You said that teaching fueled you for your future, but you ended up walking away from it. I feel like this I'm excited to hear you tell us more about this, because I feel like this is going to give us more insight into, like the book and the kind of the direction it took. So tell me, like, why did you quit teaching?

0:12:49 - Jasmine

So many reasons, so many reasons I quit teaching in 2021, which I feel like so many teachers when I say that year, like yeah, yeah, the pandemic is going on, we're ramping up on, you know, stopping the woke and the 1776 commission is out, and you know, there's there's just all of these things going on. And I live in Jackson, Mississippi, and I was teaching at a very small Christian private school and it was so hard because I loved, I loved teaching, I loved the kids that I was teaching. I was enjoying myself so much but also was feeling the mounting pressure of there is there are these battle lines being drawn about history, about quote unquote critical race theory. There are these witch hunts that are happening with teachers who are teaching certain things and using certain words. I'm teaching American history. I'm the only black teacher in the school and I'm teaching to a bunch of white kids, you know, and so it's just, it just built into kind of a I'm just going to go.

You know, nobody asked me to leave, Nobody told me that I needed to leave, but I felt like it was time for me to leave. And the thing about living in Jackson I talked to my husband all the time because he had a similar experience with his last job here in Jackson was it's very southern and so it's very like you can stay as long as you want to stay, and then you're like I'm going to go and they're like, oh man, hate to see you go, and so that was. That was definitely my experience of oh man, well, I get it.

0:14:26 - Stephanie

Because you know little conflict diverse here. Yeah, yeah, we get like we get.

0:14:31 - Jasmine

We get what's happening, we get the landscape, we get that battle lines are being drawn, and so that's why I left the classroom. But I loved teaching. I miss it all the time. I miss it every day. I just told my friend the other day we were talking she has. She has her PhD, she just graduated from Vanderbilt and she works at Penn State and is just like Also lazy.

0:14:56 - Stephanie

You know what I'm saying Also lazy.

0:14:57 - Jasmine

Yeah, right, and it was so funny because she's from England. So she got a job at Penn State and she was like, oh yeah, I'm going to work at Penn State. And everybody was like that's amazing. And she's like, oh, it's Penn State, a big deal. We're like yes.

0:15:10 - Stephanie

It is, yes, it is.

0:15:12 - Jasmine

Yes. So I was talking to her and I was like, honestly I think she says, well, what do you want to do with your degree, like what's your dream? And I said I just want to make, I just want to force people to be interested in the things that I'm interested in and to make them read what I want them to read, or they don't get a good grade. And she was like you just really miss the classroom. I was like I really do. I do?

0:15:32 - Stephanie

I really do, I really do. Yeah, talk to us about critical race theory. What is it and why is everyone angry?

0:15:40 - Jasmine

You know, I even feel like though these days even that phrase is being used a lot less. What I've noticed is that the terminology kind of shifts in changes. So when I was just out of college, I remember that everybody was talking about cultural Marxism. Everybody was like cultural Marxism this, and cultural Marxism that, and cultural Marxism this. And then after that, it was

like everybody was talking about social social justice warriors, sjws, and it was like SJW this and SJW that. And then it was like this period where it was like critical race theory.

And then now I feel like we're in this period of where it's like the word is woke, and so, even though all of those things are slightly different things, I think what people mean when they say them is the idea of social justice, the idea that there are inequities in this country that are based on race, that are based on sex, that are based on gender expression, that are based on all of these things, and that they are part of the laws of this country, they are part of the social networking of this country and they're kind of baked into this country. And what do we do? How do we address those things? Now, critical race theory handles that legislatively, and I want to just really, really reiterate that it's something that's taught on a not even just a college level, like a graduate law school level.

So critical race theory is not a simple concept. It's something that lawyers learn about in law school in order to have a principle for how they approach laws, lawmaking and the changing of laws. But the understanding of it has kind of trickled down to meme. I'm concerned that certain laws are putting forward racism or pushing the agenda of racism, and so anytime somebody says that, it's kind of gets put into the critical race theory box, but then the box is really big and nobody really knows what's all in the box when they're talking about it and it just gets yeah, it gets, it gets so confusing. I don't know what the next word is going to be after woke, but I feel like it's woke now, right now.

0:17:44 - Stephanie

So the concern with teaching. So no one's teaching critical race theory in schools, because, except for in graduate levels, to like future lawyers, absolutely. But when people are concerned about what's being taught, they're upset that it's being brought up, that there are laws and policies that promote, like keeping other, like some people down and so the other people can go up.

0:18:15 - Jasmine

Yes, yeah, and so it's more it's. I think if people are honest, what they're more so saying is not that they think that critical race theory, if they understood what critical race theory is, not that that, not that it's being taught in schools, but that the teachers who are teaching are coming from an understanding that is rooted in some of the things that critical race theory believes, and so then those teachers are then bringing that understanding to their students. I think, if I'm being the most charitable, I think that's what people mean when they talk about critical race theory being in schools.

0:18:47 - Stephanie

So why is that bad? You know?

0:18:50 - Jasmine

it depends on who you ask. A lot of Christian parents have an issue with critical race theory and all of the terminology that I just use, because it's not Christian terminology, right, it's, it is of the

world, it's not. It's not something that a bunch of theologians sat together and figured out. It's something that intellectuals and people in the academy have come up with and are describing, and I think that a lot of times evangelicals in this country are inherently suspicious of the academy, and sometimes that's what's good reason, right. Sometimes you don't.

You, as soon as you say you're a Christian, you just don't get taken seriously by people in certain incoherence of higher ed. So again, I want to have a charitable understanding, right, I don't just, it didn't just come out of nowhere. But I think a lot of people don't think that you can. They don't see the overlap between Christian ideals and some of the same things that people who espouse critical race theory believe. They don't believe that there can be overlap. They believe that it has to be. It either has to be something that is from the Bible and completely divorced from anything that a secular person has ever thought or said, or it's wrong.

0:20:04 - Stephanie

Okay, that I mean, I guess that kind of kind of makes sense. But, like, where my brain just went back to was Imago Day, which is, like that seems like the common common ground there. So is that, like I guess, is that where it's like this book came from?

0:20:24 - Jasmine

For sure. I mean, when I started writing the book it was very much at the beginning of a lot of these conversations about education, about book fanning, about all these things. I already kind of had the book in the barrel. This is what I want to write. And then all of this stuff started happening and it was like this is really what I want to write, because I feel like people think of they think of all these ideas that fall under the umbrella of critical race theory as being completely divorced from biblical ideas.

But there is an argument to be made and I make it in Crown with Glory that these ideas predate the term critical race theory. These ideas are older than Marx himself, let alone Marxism. You know they. These are ideas that Christians have had from the Bible from the very beginning and understandings that Christians have had of this country and of its deficits from the very beginning, and they've based their concerns in the Bible. And there's a way. There's a way to do that that is not threatened by fill in the blank with whatever boogie man we're talking about at a particular moment.

0:21:26 - Stephanie

Yeah, okay, so talk to me about how. Okay, again, I'm asking these questions because I'm like, tell us, tell us what you have to say about this, because I just want to. I want to hear all of it. Why is representation in history so important? I know that you talk about how it can shift, like the whole historical narrative, and I want to hear more about that.

0:21:48 - Jasmine

So I went to a very small Christian college right after, as I graduated, I was in a master's program that I didn't finish. I say I didn't finish because I don't want it to. I'm in a master's program now, so I don't want it to sound like I have several masters. I literally am going to finish

this one. Hopefully, I did finish this one and so I'm sitting in my professor's office and it's again a very small Christian university, because often when I tell this story people are like what? But you've got to understand. This was a Baptist, tiny university, and so my professor was. He had the autobiography of Malcolm X on his shelf and I was like, oh, I read that book. Do you teach that? And he's like I used to teach it, but a lot of parents didn't want me to teach it in class because it kind of made their kids feel uncomfortable. And asking the obvious question, I was like why kids? Why kids? He was like yeah, and I said you know, it's really funny because nobody ever asked me if I felt comfortable when we were reading Huck Finn. Nobody asked me Like just reread, it's a classic, we're reading it. This is just how people thought. Here it is. And he's like, wow, I never thought about it like that. Because why? Because why would he have to at this predominantly white, super small Baptist university that's so tiny and so Christian that parents can still come to 18 year old's teachers and be like don't teach that. I don't like that.

The idea that we don't teach things because they don't make, because they make people uncomfortable or they make people feel weird, causes us to bypass a lot of history. The idea that children should always look in history and feel at ease causes us to bypass a lot of areas of history, but not only that. It causes children whose history is not captured in the stories of victory that make us feel good. It causes them to be overlooked. And I felt that feeling of being overlooked so often growing up in, you know, at first in private school, then I was homeschooled, so we had a little bit more freedom. But you know you're still tied to a curriculum when you're homeschooling and a lot of times the curriculum just didn't have people that looked like me, until you got to MLK and then you got to read I have a dream and then he died, but then that's okay because everything was better after that, and then that's it.

And so learning more about representation in history has been such an important experience for me as a Christian, especially because I get to see that God uses all different kinds of people in his story. He uses people from all different backgrounds, from all different ethnicities, from all different journeys. When you only learn a history that looks a certain way, it can kind of start to feel like, oh, does God only use people that look like that? Does God think more people that look like that than other people? And you can say no, all you want. But if you can't give me any examples, what am I supposed to believe?

0:24:42 - Stephanie

Yeah, my friend Mari, who I just love. She's one of the wisest people in my life and I'm just like so honored that I get to be her friend. She, her daughter, ada, they were reading their kids Bible and Ada asked her like like a couple days later they were just like splashing around in the pool and Ada was like mommy, just got enough like girls, and she was like excuse me. And Ada was like yeah, in our Bible there's just like all the stories are about boys. And Mari was like that cannot be true. And she went and she looked and like sure enough, I think there was like one girl story. And she started to like dig deeper and dig deeper and dig deeper.

And sure enough, like the amount of male to female stories that were represented in specifically kids Bibles and I mean, granted, like when the Bible was happening, like women didn't get to do much and so, but that doesn't mean that they didn't. And so it was like even in in places where

there are stories in the Bible of women doing amazing things or participating or being like the front and center of things, it was like those stories were ignored in the Bibles, in the kids Bibles, and so Mari 's Bible comes out next year. So she, she's fixed it. But I just I think, yeah, that's the first thing that came to mind. It's like if you don't see it, then like, if you don't see yourself, then how are you supposed to know? Yeah, yeah, I know in the book that you talk about the importance of presenting black kids with accurate history because of how it, like, affects their sense of self. Can you talk to me about that?

0:26:27 - Jasmine

Yeah, I remember the first time that I found out that there were black missionaries who had gone to Africa, I was an adult and I was flabbergasted. I'd eat Africa at the same time that David Livingston was there who were doing missions work, at the same time as Mary Slessor, Gladys Howard and all the rest of them. Because growing up I loved I don't know if you ever read they were little white biographies. They were like white and they had the person's name on the top and they had like a drawing of the person in the middle and I loved those biographies. I ate them up. But the only black person that I ever read in one of those biographies, the only black woman, was Sir Jernar Truth, and so I knew about Sir Jernar Truth, but I, like, I was like, I guess that's it. I guess I guess they were just busy being slaves, I don't know. And so I remember when I learned that there were missionaries who had gone overseas, who had not been, it blew my mind when I found out that, for instance, Mariah Stewart was a missionary. She was born in Alabama. She was born in slavery. When she grew up in Alabama in slavery, neither free nor enslaved black people in Alabama were allowed to learn how to read. Neither free nor enslaved in Alabama were allowed to learn how to read.

This black girl grows up in Alabama, ends up growing up going to Congo, becoming a missionary in the Congo and helping to translate the Bible into their language, which, just like it, just is incredible. It's incredible and it's so unfortunate that I wasn't a child learning this and seeing something aspirational and seeing something beautiful. And, again, it meant a lot to me to learn about Amy Carmichael and it meant a lot to me to learn about Gladys Howard. It meant so much to me to learn about Mary Slessor. I loved those Well, like I said, I ate those old biographies up. But there's also an added dimension of learning about someone who you relate to in even more of a way, especially as a person who grew up often as the only black girl in the room and was just taught about slavery from a standpoint that made me feel very ashamed of my ancestry instead of being proud of the resilience of my ancestors. Yeah, it's just been such a beautiful thing to reframe that as an adult and it's something that I really desire for my children as well.

0:28:58 - Stephanie

Can you stop me if I'm like, if you're like, yeah, just stop me if you need to. Okay, how, what was the? What were the conversations? Like, how was history taught in a way that made you ashamed of your ancestors? Like how was there a way to like look at your ancestors in any way other than like there's half of the equation is wrong and half of the equation was really really wronged? Like how are you sitting there feeling ashamed?

0:29:31 - Jasmine

So I think oftentimes and it's so funny because a lot of the book I released two books this year. The first one was actually about shame. So I thought a lot about shame, thought a lot about shame's impact on people I think a lot of it can just be this misplaced feeling of if you're the only black girl in the room and everybody's talking about slavery in the room and it just kind of feel a little awkward and everybody's like are you okay? Are you like, are you good? Do you feel okay? And everybody, you feel like everybody's kind of looking at you. That part is just embarrassing and doesn't feel great and so you know, as a child, you don't know what to do with that. So some of it's not even like the way that you're being taught. It's the way that you're not being taught and shepherded through feelings that you have and taught how to like relate to those feelings in a healthy way. Do you know what I'm saying? So it's like, yeah, you feel that. Okay, what do we do with this and how do we remind you of this?

The other part one of my friends just put up Stories in Color is an amazing Instagram that I follow. It's a homeschool mom who is always showing resources for being more inclusive in education. And she was just talking about a book about Harriet Tubman and she said you know, it's kind of, it's an okay book, but I'm not gonna use it for my kids, and here's why. And she opens it. And then the very first paragraph of the book it says you know, harriet Tubman was born during a time where a lot of black people were in slavery. But, unlike most slaves, harriet felt like this was wrong and that she had to do something about it. And it was such a it's just like one clause Unlike most slaves. This idea that most slaves were just really happy to be slaves, we're just like cool. Yeah, this is good. This is all I know. It's great. I don't have any greater aspiration from this, but Harriet was remarkable because she had more aspirations than your average life.

Little things like that play into this idea that black people are other, that are wishes, that are desires, that are, that are quest for dignity is somehow other than our white counterparts.

You know, nobody would at all be surprised that a white people group who was kept in the kind of human bondage and was exploited to the degree that black people were in the United States, nobody would be surprised if there was an uprising, because it'd be like, yeah, you can't just keep people like that, like people are not meant to live like that. But our idea of people sometimes needs to be expanded to include people even when they don't look like you. And I feel like I experienced a lot of that growing up, where the vision was just not expanded. And again, it wasn't maliciousness on the part of my teachers, it wasn't maliciousness on even probably the part of the textbook creators. But if you don't have black people in the room and if you're coming from a majority context all of the time and you're thinking I want to make sure that white kids don't feel awkward about their ancestry, but you're not concerned about the black kids in the room, then that's the kind of educational resources that you get. Ok.

0:32:24 - Stephanie

This is such a side note, but I'm looking at something right now. I was looking to make a. I had a really big wall in our house that I needed to fill, and so I ended up tearing up a book and overlapping all these pages and I was looking for really beautiful like turned out really cool, and

it took me 20 minutes. But I was looking for I wonder if I can no, I can't tell you because it'll mess it up and I won't be able to get you back. I was looking for a book with just really beautiful like yellowed pages, and I wanted to look old.

And so I found this huge bookstore and the guy showed me all these really important old books and I was like, no, I need something that no one really cares about but that has a little bit of a tint to it. And so I found a copy of Huck Finn and I was like, hey, this is an old book I was supposed to read in middle school. This is a classic. This will be, like I don't know, perfect. And so I bought that, and I bought, like I don't know, pride and Prejudice or something like that.

And I'm pulling out the pages and I'm going what in the world? Like I, it was like I wasn't even reading it, and I'm tearing about like tearing pages being like okay, there's the N word, there's the N word, there's okay. Well, I'm definitely not using that. Like I ended up throwing the whole book away. I don't know that. I remembered that. So from like it was, yeah, it was a lot.

0:33:50 - Jasmine

Yeah it is, and it's a lot not to be prepped for too. Yeah, I remember my husband was listening to Huck Finn on an audiobook. It's like what are you? So I'm listening to it. I'm like what are you listening to? And he's like it's Huck Finn. I was like, oh okay.

0:34:09 - Stephanie

Cause it sounds like just this, like yeah. I was like what are we doing?

0:34:11 - Jasmine

What's going on? It was Nick Offerman was narrating it the wrong. So I was like what is Nick talking about? He was like he's narrating Huck Finn. I was like okay.

0:34:23 - Stephanie

Yeah, I bought it because I was like this is a fun book about like boys horsing around on a boat and I'm like, okay, was that actually? Am I thinking about the wrong book here? It's I don't anyway, yeah.

0:34:33 - Jasmine

And that's a thing like it. It is a fun book. It is a fun book. It has all of those parts about it that are unsavory and also those parts about it that are fun, and I think that that's the perfect example of what our history is. It's not just one thing. It's not just like this beautiful, triumphant story. It's God, the parts of it that make you wins and the parts of it that make you want to turn away, and the parts of it that are like, oh, I remember the story of America as being something completely different than what this particular page in the story is telling me right now. That doesn't mean that the good stuff that you thought wasn't true necessarily, but it might mean that it's not always true or that it's not the whole truth.

0:35:13 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah. In your research, what did you discover about the efforts of Southern educators to shift the historical narrative in the Confederacies? Favor, oh, I ask, as I know where a whole bunch of Confederate flags are, just off the highway.

0:35:28 - Jasmine

I know it's. So it's one of those things where I'm like I want somebody to make a movie about it and I want these sweet little Southern ladies to be these sinister bad guys in the movie, because they were like we talked about earlier with Mississippi and the leaving my job, and they're like oh sorry, you're leaving, darn, we hope that you would stay. Just kidding bye. It's such the personality of the South. So after the Civil War, these Southern women, the daughters, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, so daughters of Confederate soldiers all banded together. The South had an image problem because they had committed treason against the United States of America. I was just driving home from dropping my kids off the other day and I saw an American flag on the bottom and a Confederate flag on the top on a flag pulling somebody's guard, and I was like that's ridiculous, like one or the other, because it wasn't both. It was one or the other. And the reason why that flag can stand up there and people can drive by it and it's not like taken down for decimation or treason, is because of the efforts of the Daughters of the Confederacy to rehabilitate the South's image, and so they spent all of this time and money and energy and effort into a few things. So monuments a lot of the monuments that we see were built in the wake of the Civil War by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to glorify Lee and Jackson and all these things. Education so there were a lot of letter writing campaigns from Confederate women seeking to change the way that the Civil War was being taught in schools, to make sure that the war wasn't about slavery, Like you think that it was, but it wasn't. It was about states rights, it was about tariffs. Slaves were happy anyway, they were very well treated. And also a lot of people were like it was a missionary endeavor. We took the Heathens, we brought the Heathens to America, we gave the Heathens Jesus. It's all good. So that was a lot of what was going on as well, and so a lot of these ideas kind of moved through Southern classrooms and were exported. You know I do.

I do a lot of polls on my Instagram. I ask like, hey, if you ever heard, you know this, whatever element it's called the lost cause, have you ever heard this element of the lost cause? And a bunch of people from the South are like yes, and some people from the North are like I had no idea that people thought this. But some people from the North are like, yes, I have definitely heard that. I definitely had heard that the word was not about slavery. I had definitely heard that slavery was already on its way out and I've definitely heard you know all these other things. And it just goes to show the power of education and the power of shifting educational focus and the power of monuments kind of desensitizing us to the things that we see every day. I see the Confederate flag all the time, all the time, and even as a black woman, even as a black woman whose ancestors were enslaved I don't have the same visceral, violent reaction to the Confederate flag that I probably would if I didn't see it every single day.

0:38:32 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, talk to me about. The word was about slavery, yeah.

0:38:37 - Jasmine

Right For sure. And the war was about slavery. And they said that it was about slavery. And they had these ordinances of succession. South Carolina made the first one and they said we are succeeding because the North is threatening our right to hold slaves. And the Mississippi Declaration said we are succeeding because the North is interfering with our right to hold slaves, which is our God given right and which makes sense, because black people can be on this so longer than we can because there's skin color. And then the Texas one said wait, I'm sorry, what'd you just say? Uh-huh. So the Mississippi was like, hey, slavery makes sense. Okay, because, anyway, look at them, they're made for the sun, it's fine, it's in their ordinance, it's.

You can find us all online and Texas is my favorite because I'm from Texas and Texas is really good at rehabilitating its image. I'm actually writing my entire thesis about Texas versus Mississippi and how Texas is really good at rehabilitating her image and Mississippi has not been as good at it. But Texas said in their articles, in their ordinance of succession we're succeeding because you are trying to abolish slavery and you're trying to make black people equal to white people and that is against the laws of nature. So we are succeeding. It's right there in black and white. So the fact that these ladies could take what is in black and white and what is still in black and white and make people doubt it that's what I'm saying. It's like a thriller. It's a thriller, somebody's going to write it because it's, but did you hear how I asked that?

0:40:08 - Stephanie

I was like it was about slavery, dot dot dot. Yeah, right, but it's interesting because so I grew up in Colorado and that's like, I guess, neither the North or the South, but then I've lived in Nashville for the last 10 years and I lived in Georgia for a little bit too, and so there are things that if you grew up here, you would have known or heard or learned or something that I didn't. But there are things that I've seen and there are no confederate flag. Well, there, honestly, probably are some in Colorado, but I didn't remember seeing them. But I'm not kidding, there's a. If you drive down 65 in Nashville, on the right, if you're going towards Nashville, there's like a ring of them and there used to be a statue there of I'm forgetting his name, but it was like a confederate statue. That was like this guy was responsible for like a massacre, like single-handedly responsible for a massacre, and like why is he? Why is this here? I'll remember his name as soon as we hang up.

0:41:10 - Jasmine

It happens all the time.

0:41:12 - Stephanie

Okay, so tell me about what's the double curse of the free black woman.

0:41:18 - Jasmine

The idea of the double curse. It comes from a speech from an abolitionist named Robert Purvis. His father was a slaveholder, his mother was an enslaved woman, and so he looked white. He could have passed for white. He often was mistaken for white when he was taking

transportation and things like that. But he married a black woman, was allowed abolitionists and was super vocal, and he also had a daughter who turned out to be a really cool suffragette, and so what he said in his speech about the double curse was women should be allowed to vote, and I honestly think it's more important for my daughter to be allowed to vote than my son, because my daughter is both a woman and black, which means that she is fighting against two things that the society does not prize, two things that put her at risk, and so I think she should be able to vote. Like it's super important.

We love Robert Purvis, and so the idea of the double curse just being, in modern terms, another way we would put it in an other. No, no, terminology that people don't like is intersectionality, but it's this idea that you have these intersecting identities blackness and womanhood, that kind of like overlap in ways that make your life a little bit more difficult and a little bit more complicated than somebody who does not have both of those things intersecting, and a little bit is an understatement for sure, especially when you're thinking about Victorian times. So you have this image of Victorian womanhood that is this chaste, untouched, modest, cared for. She can't see a lot of gruesome things because she'll faint, she needs her smelling salts, she's just, oh, she's a lady. Right, you have that. And that is living and thriving.

That image is living and thriving at the same time that women, white women, are being forced to do factory labor that is very dangerous and very grueling, that black women are living in the South being repeatedly victimized, sexually, physically, spiritually assaulted on all ends, being forced to work the same jobs at the minute or working being forced to work the same hours at the minute, or working being forced to give their children to other people to raise and take care of so that they can work.

You have those two things that are existing in opposition to one another. And so when you have free black women, they are neither enslaved and living the imagery of the enslaved woman, nor are they seen as white women. And no matter what they do, they'll never be seen as white women, they will always be seen as closer to the enslaved woman than they will be seen as a white woman because they're black. And so that kind of gets to the heart of the double curse, as Robert Purvis understood it and as a lot of women articulated it just that tightrope of having to be a respectable woman in a time where a respectable womanhood was something that was often withheld from black women.

0:44:17 - Stephanie

That's really like overlapped some of the research that I've been doing lately about. What I've been looking at is what did ideal look like? Who were women told that they had to be?

Throughout history and I stopped for a while on the time period that you're talking about because it was the first just the options for women. I feel like I've never been good and there just have always been very few options, if any, but even less for black women. You said that, the double curse. Now you said that, the intersection of womanhood and being black. There are more challenges For those of us who aren't black. Can you talk to us about what are some of the challenges that we may not know about because they're not our daily reality?

0:45:17 - Jasmine

The one thing comes to mind first and I always mention this one. So anybody who is listening, who has ever heard me do an interview, is like she's going to talk about maternal mortality, and I am. I'm always going to talk about maternal mortality because I live in Mississippi, which has one of the highest rates of black in general, it has one of the highest rates of fetal and maternal mortality period, but it has one of the highest rates of black maternal and black fetal mortality. And so I moved from Minnesota, which had amazing healthcare, to Mississippi and I had my second child. So my thought process in finding a doctor is taking in okay, black women are way more likely to die in childbirth than their white or Hispanic counterparts. Okay, so my first assumption is okay, it's probably because black women are more likely to be poor and not likely to have the same access to healthcare as white women. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you are, it doesn't matter your socioeconomic status, it doesn't matter the status of your education, it doesn't matter, it does not matter. You, as a black woman, are more likely to die in childbirth than your white counterparts. Period, it's how somebody like Serena Williams Serena Williams can have a near-death experience in the hospital. It's how you know, it's all these things, that just kind of that you have to think about.

And so I was like, yeah, I need to find a doctor I need to find. So I'm like, okay, I'm looking for a black doctor, I'm looking for a doctor who has a low number of C-section rates, I'm looking for a doctor who has all the you know, looking for a hospital that has all these different things, and it's something that you know in talking about. And again, we live in Mississippi, so my white friends are also like healthcare is just not the best here. We're really doing our best. But I had that added layer of knowledge that, in spite of the fact that we're all struggling in this state to try to get the care that we need, there's an added level of risk for me. And so there that's. That kind of plays out. Where does it come from?

Is it like poor care. It depends. And so I will say in answer to your question fetal, black, fetal mortality rates go down when they have black pediatricians. And that's not me saying that white doctors are being angels of death and not taking care of their patients. That is me saying that a lot of times, things present differently in black people.

Even I was talking to somebody the other day there's somebody that I follow on Instagram again who will post what a deadly rash looks like on a black person versus what it looks like on a white person, but the medical textbook only has it on the white person, right?

So? Or what this looks like on you know, it's great. So if your assumption, if you have a white assumption and you assume that your patients present in the way that most white people present and then a black person does not present in the exact same way as that white person when they have the exact same risk factors, that puts a black person even more in danger. If you're in medical school and you're not learning how rashes look on dark skin and on life, again, you're putting your dark skin patients in danger. If you're in medical school and you're learning what medical history looks like for a white person, but not what a medical history could look like for a black person, then you're putting your black patients into danger, and so making whiteness

the defaults in a medical setting puts everybody who does not fit that construct of whiteness into danger, and it's the same across the board in all kinds of areas of society.

0:48:44 - Stephanie

Thanks for entering that question. I appreciate it, Of course. Okay, in the book I know you talk about separating the person of Jesus from the racial prejudice of professing Christians. Can you tell us what you mean by this? And now we begin to do that?

0:48:59 - Jasmine

There's so much of a conversation going on right now about how Christianity is the white man's religion and how the enslaved were forced to be Christians that Christianity was beat into them. But in reality, especially after Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, a lot of slaveholders did not, did not want enslaved people to go to church. They definitely did not want them to read, certainly not the Bible. You don't want to read Ezekiel, with God telling the Israelites to smash their enemies babies heads on rock. No, we're not gonna read that. They don't want, they're not allowed to. Black people are not allowed to gather without a white person present, free or enslaved. All of these restrictions start to come down the pipeline in order to stop slave rebellions, because there is this widespread belief that if enslaved people get ahold of the liberating gospel of Christ, they're gonna wanna be liberated and so we're gonna try to keep that from them as long as possible.

To me, the idea and the fact that Christianity could be seen as so subversive and dangerous that it didn't even be kept away from black folks and black folks still found access to it and still found a foothold in that religion and still created their own counter-cultural understanding of Christianity, is just one of the most beautiful things and I refuse to give that up, because white Americans version of the religion was very hypocritical at times. It's not the only version that there is, it's not the only shade that there is and it's not the only iteration of Christianity that there is. And I feel like the more that we understand that, not just even in a black white sense, right, but in a worldwide sense, the more that we understand that Christianity is this ancient religion that started with people that don't look like you or me, I think, the more we don't confine Jesus to the bad acts of people who claim to follow Him.

0:50:59 - Stephanie

Love that so much. I think that that's really helpful because I think that we in the last I don't know this is like painting with just a giant like roller, not even a broad brush, but like I think in the last while we've seen some like pretty bad behavior out of the church and I mean that's like always, oh yeah. But it feels like you kind of have to pick between sometimes. It feels like you have to pick between caring about people and being part of the church and it's not all churches and it's not all people and certainly churches who really don't care about some people do a good job of caring about others. But it just feels like, if you are, it feels like there's like I don't know, I'm not withholding words, I'm just having a hard time forming them.

I really like that's just a really warm, beautiful reminder that Jesus and Christianity predates all of this and that it's been powerful all the way through and liberating for so many people and a safe

place for so many people. Even though it can be used as a weapon, it isn't always and it hasn't always been, and that's just. I like that. Okay, let's see. Is there anything else I really really want to make sure I don't miss. In the book you talk about the difference between defending humanity and proclaiming it, and I want to just hear you talk about that real quick.

0:52:43 - Jasmine

I was really adamant that we have proclaiming in our subtitle proclaiming the truth of black dignity instead of defending. Because to me, defending is this like I'm going to go back and forth with you and I'm going to listen to your counterpoints and I'm going to offer my counterpoint and we're going to have an argument. And proclaiming is like I'm not going to argue about it because it's just true. It's just true. Black people are made in God's image and they are. They have dignity and they have significance, and it's just the truth. And if you're ready to hear that truth, that's awesome. And if you're not ready to hear that truth, that's okay. We're just not ready to have a conversation, and coming to that point has been one of the most freeing and amazing things lately. It's just I'm here to make a proclamation.

Now, can that proclamation be a defense? Absolutely, but it's kind of that. I'm not going to argue about it, because it's just true. It's not even a fair fight, because it's just true. So I'm not going to argue with you that this guy is green instead of blue. It's just I you're saying nonsense words and so I'm going to let you say your nonsense words and that's. I hope you get help, but I can't help you Is kind of where I'm at with it right now. For sure, love that.

0:53:53 - Stephanie

Is there. Just as we're finishing it. There are so many things I want to talk to you about and I want to hear like every single story of all of the women that you like uncovered in your last book and are not covered, but like the stories that you dug into, and there's like so many things that we didn't talk about. But I just am. Really I want to tell you that I'm really grateful for, I don't know, just like a safe space to ask questions that that like I think we all, as in anyone listening, feel like we should have more answers as well as knowing the order of the president and the state capitals. You know, like it's just it's hard to ask questions when you feel like you already know the answer or when you're afraid that you might know the answer but you might have it wrong. It's like when someone goes like do you know who sings this, and you're like the eagle, totally or something.

0:54:45 - Jasmine

Like you're, like I'm about to look so dumb.

0:54:46 - Stephanie

So you just say like I don't really know, and so I just thank you for letting me ask questions, cause I know that a lot of us are sitting here going like I don't know what critical race theory is talking about, and everyone's really. What's something else that you, I guess? Okay, so you're going back to school when you were young and when you were the only black girl in the room. What is something that you wish more of your white friends could have known or understood?

0:55:18 - Jasmine

I wish we would have had to sit at the feet of more black stories. I wish we would have had times where they felt uncomfortable too, and then we found out that you know what it's okay, cause sometimes history is uncomfortable. I wish you would have talked about it more openly, more talked about that discomfort, talked about shame that can come up. What to do with that shame? I wish we had had more open conversations than just you know the white American history status quo that so many of us got growing up. I wish that you know I'd had a more colorful experience and it's really cool to see my sons having that experience in school. Coming home and telling me you know about, my son came home with a paper. It was like a summary about Shirley Chisholm and he had to, like, answer some questions about her and I was like that's so cool, like I was not taught who she was in school. It just that's so little right, like that's such a little thing, but it would have been so huge to me.

0:56:16 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, okay, I, we are gonna have you on the show again. You're gonna get you're gonna get sick of girls night, if that is even possible. But really, Jasmine, thank you so much for coming on the show. Thank you, for you are a really, really, really good teacher. Like I just thank you. You're a really really good teacher. The way that you explain things is really like helpful and simple and profound all at the same time, and I just, yeah, I'm just really grateful for you. We will link to everything, all of your, all your books, your website, social media, everything in the show notes, so that everybody can follow you and see. You guys can be friends, and I'm just really glad that we get to be friends too.

0:56:58 - Jasmine

Awesome. Thank you so much. We're so glad we connected.

0:57:03 - Stephanie

You guys, this isn't Jasmine amazing. Now don't forget that. If you ever want to find the links for anything we talk about in our girls night episodes, you can always find those over in our show notes. Just head over to girlsnightpodcast.com and you'll find links for everything, including links for Jasmine, so you can pick up her book and follow along with all the great stuff she's doing.

All right, friends, that's it for today's episode, but we have so much good stuff ahead still this season and with that in mind, now is the perfect time to make sure you're subscribed. Subscribing to the show is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode. It won't send you an email or anything, it just makes sure your phone downloads the latest episode when a new one's released. And I did want to take a quick second to ask you a favor. If you enjoyed this episode or if you've been a girls night fan for a while now, would you take just two quick seconds to leave us a rating and review on iTunes? Those reviews help out our podcast so much and it really would mean the world to me. So if you would take two quick seconds to do that, I'd be so grateful. All right, friends, thank you so much for joining me for girls night. I'll see you next week.